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Iron Hand, the Tory Chief.⁶⁸



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IRON HAND,

CHIEF OF THE TORY LEAGUE.

BY FREDERICK FOREST.

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IRON HAND, CHIEF OF THE TORY LEAGUE: OR, THE DOUBLE FACE.

CHAPTER I.

THE QUARREL.

WHEN the colonists had acquired a mastery over the savages of the wilderness, and assisted in breaking the French power on their frontier, they began to feel their manhood stirring within them, and they tacitly agreed no longer to submit to the narrow and oppressive policy of Great Britain. Their industry and commerce were too expansive to be confined within the narrow limits of those restrictions which the Board of Trade, from time to time, had imposed, and they determined to cast off these chains. Moreover, the principles of civil and religious liberty urged them on; and, at last, the trumpet of the Revolution was sounded, as the violent result of their dissatisfactions.

It was during the fourth year of this Revolution, in the year of our Lord 1778, that our tale opens in the vicinity of Lake George, near Fort Ann.

In a pretty, white cottage a short distance from the fort sat two men over their wine, discussing the politics of the day.

One, who is destined to be our hero, was about five and twenty years of age; he was tall and commanding; his features nicely molded and in perfect harmony; the eyes were gray, although, at a distance, one might mistake them for black, and his hair was dark-brown and curled close to his head.

Edgar Sherwood, for such was his name, was of English birth. Another brother and he were the last of an aristocratic family. These two had, however, some few years previous, separated on account of a misunderstanding in regard to their paternal acres. After the death of their father, our hero inherited the greater part of the estate. This his brother declared to be unjust, and had sworn he would have satisfaction. Thus they parted.

Edgar had been treated perhaps a little unfairly by his native country in some affairs, and becoming enraged against her he had come to America to espouse the cause of the struggling colonists.

The man with whom Edgar Sherwood was conversing was the father of his betrothed; his name was Thomas Lear. He was a native of England, and a thorough Tory.

"Can it be possible, young man, that you are so rash as to think of joining the Continental army?" said Thomas Lear, gazing at Edgar Sherwood with a look of astonishment, and his face flushing to a deep crimson.

"It is, sir."

"And have you no respect for your king, or love for your family and friends?"

"For the former, none whatever, but for the latter a great deal of love and respect."

"Well, then, how can you go to work deliberately and bring this disgrace upon them? Why, Sherwood, it is absurd to think of doing such a thing!" and Lear began to grow angry.

"If it is absurd to lend one's aid to a righteous cause, then I am willing to be called absurd or rash, but I am determined to do this."

"But, do you have faith in this war? Do you believe these colonists will ever overcome King George?"

"Most assuredly they will!" replied Edgar Sherwood. "Why, sir, they fight like tigers, and they never will remain conquered. What arouses these men to arms is the love of liberty, their firesides, their wives and children."

"Very well; perhaps they are good at fighting, but, where is the money coming from to maintain this war any longer? Congress has none."

"They will fight without pay ; and, moreover, each soldier will contribute his mite."

"Nevertheless, they are but a handful at best, and can not hold out much longer."

"Ah, my good sir!" and Edgar Sherwood's eyes sparkled with enthusiasm," do not be deceived in this. The colonists, though few in number, have been compelled from the beginning to be self-reliant, and have been made strong by their mother's neglect. Heretofore they have built fortifications, raised armies, and fought battles for England's glory and their own preservation, without England's aid and without her sympathy ; and, think you now they can not do this again, with twofold zeal, for themselves?"

Thomas Lear was beginning to chafe under the young man's patriotic words, and perceiving that he could not persuade him to abandon his purpose, he became very angry.

"I ask you once more, Sherwood," said he, "to pause and consider the consequences ; think—I entreat you—of my daughter, Imogene, before you take this rash step."

"I have considered it all, sir, but my mind remains the same."

Lear grew deathly pale with rage at these last words. Thomas Lear was a rich man, and he had long counted upon having Edgar Sherwood for a son-in-law, but this could not be under these circumstances. He dashed his wine-glass savagely upon the table, and sprung to his feet.

"You are mad ! stark mad !" he cried. "Henceforth our connection is severed ; never dare to cross my threshold again, for you are a traitor to your king, sir—begone !"

Having uttered these words, the old man sunk back in his chair perfectly exhausted.

At this moment, the door was suddenly thrown open, and Imogene Lear—Edgar Sherwood's betrothed—appeared upon the scene.

"Oh, father !" she cried, casting herself at the feet of her parent, "I implore you to have mercy ! Recall your words—forgive !"

"Never !" cried Lear.

"Be it so !" said Edgar Sherwood, scornfully, and was gone.

One month has passed away since the events last related, and during this time Edgar Sherwood had become a captain in the American army, and was stationed with his regiment at Fort Ann.

It was a bright, clear morning in the month of September, and a gentle breeze caused the flag of freedom to rise and fall in graceful folds over the garrison, inspiring the heart of every loyal man with patriotic fervor as he looked up to it.

Within the fort, every thing seemed in commotion, but without, all was quiet, and an observer would never have surmised that any thing particular was going on. The soldiers were hurrying back and forth; and some were collected in groups busily talking.

During the past night, the commander had received information from one of his spies that the notorious band, called the Tory League, led by their villainous chief, Iron Hand, was preparing to attack the house of a prominent Whig, and that it would be necessary to send a company or two of men to secure the patriot's safety.

The colonel had chosen Captain Sherwood to go on this little expedition with his company, and the men were now preparing for that purpose.

The Tory League was composed of Tories and Indians, whom King George, foreseeing at the beginning of the war would be valuable allies to him if but secured, sent over agents to enlist in his cause. Among these agents came the man who had made himself so notorious throughout the country under the title of Iron Hand, which name the Indians gave him. The villainous deeds of this band and their white chief were countless, and they had become a terror to all stanch Whigs.

A large reward had been offered for the capture of Iron Hand, dead or alive, but to no profit; he was too artful for his enemy. In fact, no one, as yet, in the Continental army had been able even to obtain a sight of him. Search had been made for the rendezvous of the band but without success.

The attacks of the Tory League were always made with so much privacy as to exclude the sufferers, not only from succor, but frequently, through a dread of future depredations, from the commiseration of their neighbors also.

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The soldiers received the orders to prepare for action with delight ; excitement of any kind had been scarce for the last few months around the fort, and time dragged heavily on with them. Captain Sherwood felt some pleasure also on being chosen for this occasion, as he had had but little opportunity to show his valor since his enlistment. Yet, all day long his face wore a troubled look, and his whole manner seemed changed from usual gayety to sadness. The few who had observed this attributed it to fear, and yet could not believe that such a man should even know the meaning of the word.

When evening came, and a few hours before he was to start out upon his mission, he sat down, and, writing a short note, dispatched it to the little white cottage on the hill.

Imogene Lear, on receiving her lover's note, cast a shawl about her delicate form, and hastened to the place appointed for their meeting. It was in a thick grove of cedars a short distance from the cottage.

Captain Sherwood, dressed in his long military cloak, with his sword girded to his side, was pacing to and fro in a thoughtful mood under the shadow of the stalwart trees.

"Edgar," whispered Imogene, approaching with noiseless steps behind him, and placing her little white hand upon his shoulder.

"Imogene? It is you!" said he, turning quickly and throwing his arm around her waist. "I was afraid you would be unable to come, my darling."

"Father was asleep and I stole out unobserved, but I must not remain long away, or he may awake and miss me."

"Is he as savage against me as ever?" asked Edgar.

"Yes ; but, do not let this trouble you, dear Edgar, I am the same—as—ever."

"I know you are, my darling," and he imprinted a kiss upon her cheek.

Imogene Lear was eighteen years of age. She was tall in stature, and most exquisitely formed. Her skin was white, even waxen white ; and now and then a tinge of the rose visited her cheek ; her lips were of that ruby red which goes with perfect health ; perfectly arched brows, and long, dark lashes, shading eyes of wonderful brilliancy and depth of expression, made up this face suitable for an angel.

"Let us sit down," said Edgar, leading the way to a fallen tree. "How are we to overcome this prejudice of your father, Imogene?"

"I know not," said she; "he is very angry with you, but time may change him."

"Do you think he is right and I am wrong in this matter?"

Imogene colored and did not reply. Edgar saw this, and dropping his head, said, sorrowfully:

"Then you think I am in the wrong?"

"Oh, no! but you know—he—is my father."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Edgar, impatiently.

"There, dear Edgar, do not let us quarrel about this; of course you are in the right."

Then the couple remained silent for some time.

"We were to be married next month. Need this rupture between your father and me make any difference?"

"You would not urge me to marry against his will?"

"Oh, no," said Edgar, coldly.

"We can wait awhile and he may relent."

"And pray how long will you wait for me?"

"All my lifetime, if need be!" and Imogene looked him full in the face with her beautiful eyes.

"And will you never forget, whatever may happen?"

"Never."

"My beautiful one, I believe you. Forgive me for asking you to do wrong."

"You said in your note, Edgar, that you were going away to-night."

The same troubled look that had haunted him all day now again was plainly visible on Edgar Sherwood's face.

"Yes," said he, "but we return to-morrow morning."

"Are you going to battle?" asked Imogene, quickly, perceiving this look. "Is there any thing serious about to happen?"

"No; why do you ask?"

"Because you seem troubled about something."

"I am a little—shall I tell you why?"

"Certainly, dear Edgar, are we to have any secrets between us?"

"But you will laugh at me if I tell you?"

"Try me."

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"Are you superstitious, Imogene?"

"No, not very."

"Well, it is all about a strange dream that I had last night, and you will say that I am superstitious if I tell it to you."

"Come, now, do not delay any longer, but tell it to me at once; my curiosity is excited."

"It appeared to me as follows:

"I seemed to be walking by the side of a lake, when, suddenly, a shriek, which fairly chilled my blood, filled the air, and then I thought I saw you rush past me, dressed in white, and crying, *help! help! help!*

"Approaching the water you sprang into a canoe and pushed far away from the shore. I could neither move nor speak to you, and my agony was killing me. The canoe began to float, I thought, bearing you with it. Then I was trying to swim to you, when, in a moment, the boat mysteriously disappeared. I was paralyzed, and looking down into the clear water, I thought I saw you lying upon the bottom.

"At this moment some one behind me laughed—laughed as only a fiend could laugh. Turning around, I thought I saw my own image, and I started back a step. The apparition approached, and pointing down at you, said: 'Look, look, this shall be your grave also! Beware of your shadow!' and then it vanished.

"I awoke. Cold perspiration stood in great beads upon my forehead. You will tell me that I ought not to let this trouble me, as it was only a dream; nevertheless, I can not help it; it has taken a strong hold upon me, and I can not shake it off."

"It was strange," mused Imogene. "I hope nothing will happen to you, Edgar, for if I could hear that you were—well, never mind what—I should die with grief."

The couple now observed that there was a light in the cottage.

"I must go now," said Imogene, starting up, half-affrighted lest her father should miss her.

"I will go part way with you," and they moved away.

As they arrived near the house, they stopped a moment before parting, and Edgar happened to cast a glance back to the woods.

There, standing by a huge tree, where the moonlight fell upon him, was the form of a man—a perfect copy in every respect of Edgar Sherwood.

“Do you see it?” whispered Imogene, trembling and turning ashy pale.

“Yes.”

CHAPTER II.

THE MURDERED MAN.

It was near midnight when Captain Sherwood and his men arrived in the vicinity of the Whig's house. They had miscalculated the distance from the fort, and were later than was designed.

The Whig's residence was one of the old-fashion farm-houses common in those days, and on all sides of it was a thick growth of foliage which, at a short distance, completely hid it from view.

The soldiers marched in single file cautiously up the road that led to the front of the house and halted. All was quiet and dark around the place. Captain Sherwood advanced a few steps and listened—the low, melancholy howl of a dog broke the stillness. Then he approached the front door to knock, but finding it open, entered.

The lower rooms of the house were dark and deserted; the furniture was scattered about in great disorder. Again the captain heard the howl of a dog which seemed to come from over his head, and hastening up the stairs he entered one of the upper rooms, where a horrid spectacle met his sight. There, on the floor, lay an old man weltering in his blood—dead. His body was horribly mangled and the scalp torn from his head. A faithful Newfoundland dog was standing with his forepaws upon the dead man's breast, mourning over him.

Captain Sherwood turned away sick at heart, and dashed down the stairs back to his men.

“The villains have been here,” said he, “and sacked the house. The old man lies dead upon the floor; the rest of the family were probably taken prisoners. Let War-Cloud hunt out their trail, for we must shoot every man of this gang.”

nt fell every turg- The soldiers were furious at this new outrage, and manifested their willingness to follow the Tory League to the end of the earth, for vengeance. In a few moments War-Cloud—the scout—gave the signal that he had found the trail, and the company started off in pursuit. Every foot of the ground was familiar to the scout, and he had no difficulty in leading the way.

his had han All night long they hurried on in pursuit, over hills and valleys, through woods, and across plains. The trees, clad in their autumnal garb, looked like iron warriors in the moonlight, and every now and then, as a slight wind whirled the leaves to the ground, the troops would stop and listen for their enemy.

The night wore on until the moon having completed her course, left the land in darkness—but darkness not long to last, for soon the orient heralded the approach of dawning day.

rm- s a ely As the eastern horizon began to show these signs, the soldiers, being fatigued, halted upon the summit of a high hill. Their tramp had been a long one, but still there were no signs of the Tory League save their trail, which they seemed to have taken no pains to conceal. The League had undoubtedly got a good start and were improving their advantage.

ad let a g to e e n e Captain Sherwood and War-Cloud withdrew a short distance from the troops, to a cliff that jutted out from the general line of the mountain. Here they could command a view of an entire valley to the distance of many miles. It was quite level and presented a beautiful scene. The surface was covered with a carpet of bright green, enameled by flowers that gleamed like many-colored gems, and here and there the willow mingled its foliage in soft shady groves, forming inviting retreats. A stream, like a silver serpent, bisected the valley—not running in a straight course, but in luxuriant windings, as though it loved to tarry in the midst of the bright scene.

War-Cloud, after scanning the whole plain before him for some time, turned to the captain with delight.

“Look, chief!” said he, pointing to that part of the valley almost below them. “See! white and red devils right there.”

Yes, there was the Tory League sure enough, quietly seated

upon the ground, enjoying their morning meal in full sight of the captain.

It was a motley crowd, indeed. There were white men dressed in British uniforms and others merely in loose hunting-shirts and breeches, together with the dusky savages who were in full war-costume—that is, naked to the waist, and painted over the breast and face so as to render them as frightful as possible. Their heads were closely shaven over the temples and behind the ears—a patch upon the top was cropped short, but in the center of the crown, one long lock of hair remained uncut, which was intermingled with plumes and plaited so as to hang down the back.

“Surely,” said the captain, “this is but a small part of the Tory League, for there are hardly more than seventy-five men here, and the band is said to number two or three hundred.”

“We’ll make the snakes these many less!” said the scout.

“Yes, we’ll give the villains their deserts in a short space of time; but where are the prisoners?” exclaimed the captain, glancing searchingly over the band.

“There!” said War-Cloud, his practiced eye observing them at once, seated beneath the shade of a willow tree. “Three women.”

“To their rescue at once!” cried the captain, dashing away to his company. “Up, up, every man of you, and follow me!”

The path that led from the cliff to the valley was nearly half a mile in length before it reached the level below, winding through a growth of young trees which completely hid the soldiers from view.

Down, down the mountain’s side they hurried faster and faster, until at length they burst forth upon the open plain, within a few hundred yards of the enemy.

“Now, my brave fellows!” shouted Captain Sherwood, wielding his sword above his head, “teach these British villains and red rascals decency!” and away the whole troop rushed wildly upon the foe.

This was a surprise to the Tories and Indians, and a general panic seized upon them. Unmindful of every thing but their own safety, they took to flight, leaving their prisoners.

But, after fleeing a short distance, and finding themselves hard pressed by their foe, they turned about like hunted game at bay to give battle.

But a moment elapsed, and full two hundred men were engaged in deadly conflict.

Crack—crack—crack, went the rifles, and a sulphury smoke spread a cloud upon the air. As the vapory mass cleared away, some were seen dashing at each other with their empty guns, some twanging their bows from a distance, and others grappling in hand-to-hand combat.

Neither bugle nor drum sent forth its inspiring notes; no cannon roiled its thunder; no rocket blazed; but every now and then the wild war-whoop rung out upon the air, making the blood of the listener run cold. And then came the fierce charging cheer of the troops, and the cries of triumph and vengeance.

While the fight was raging, War-Cloud, observing two Indians making for their prisoners, lashed under the willow tree, uttered the war-cry and started after them at full speed. The savages looked behind them, and seeing but one adversary, gave fight. War-Cloud whirled his tomahawk at the foremost one's head, but the savage with a quick movement evaded the weapon and sprung forward with his knife. Then there was a desperate struggle of life and death. The bodies of the combatants seemed twined around each other; then one of them fell heavily to the ground. War-Cloud's antagonist had fallen. But before the scout could whirl about, the other Indian—an active warrior—rushed upon him and bore him down. His knee was pressed on War-Cloud's breast, and his arm raised on high to drive the deadly blade into his heart! but at this instant Captain Sherwood's trusty rifle sounded on the air—the savage dropped dead, and the scout was saved.

At length, after an hour of hard fighting, the Tories were completely routed; and but few ever lived to tell the tale of their disaster. After the excitement was over, and while the soldiers were looking after their dead and wounded, the white captives, who had been silent observers of the fray, were released from their fetters. Their joy was great at being restored to liberty again, but their grief was greater for their

murdered father. The story of the captives was to this effect :

At an early hour in the evening, and while the old man and his three daughters were gathered round their fireside chatting, their Newfoundland dog sprung to his feet and rushed toward the door, growling fiercely.

His growl shortly increased to a bark—so earnest, that it was evident some one was outside. The door was shut and barred ; but the old man, thinking perhaps it might be the soldiers whom he expected, pulled out the bar, and opened the door without inquiring.

He had scarcely shown himself, when the wild whoops of Indians rung on their ears, and a blow from a heavy club prostrated him upon the threshold. In spite of the terrible onset of the brave dog, the savages, white and red, rushed into the house yelling fearfully, and brandishing their weapons. In less than five minutes the house was plundered of every valuable article. The old man, partly recovering, had seized his gun and mounted the stairs, where he was met and butchered outright. When the marauders had finished plundering, they seized their prisoners and made off in haste.

Such was the tale of the three females.

The soldiers were soon collected into ranks, and were ready for marching orders. They had been triumphant, and were in good spirits. Nearly every man of their foe lay dead or dying upon the field, while they had lost but three men and only five wounded. However, in the midst of their exultations, a murmur ran through the crowd, and every man looked at his companion inquiringly. "What had become of their brave leader, Captain Sherwood?" each asked, in a whisper. **He had disappeared from their midst.**

An hour was spent in search for him ; the valley and surrounding woods were scoured in vain, for he was not found. The troops were obliged to turn their steps homeward without him. It was nearly evening when they arrived at the fort, where they were hailed with loud shouts from their comrades when the news of victory was proclaimed. But, afterward, when it was found that the captain was missing, a shade of sadness seemed to fall on all. Immediately scouts were sent in all directions to search for him.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRANGE FACE.

THE ladies of the garrison for some time had been suffering *ennui*, and after holding a consultation, they resolved to petition for some change to break the monotonous life. Accordingly, when all their feminine forces were brought to bear upon the officers, they forthwith yielded, and it was determined that the following night—the night after the soldiers' return—should be a gala occasion; a night devoted to *Terpsichore*.

The ladies set to work with an ardent zeal, decorating the hall where the ball was to be held. It was a long barracks used for the officers' mess-room. The regimental flags were placed here and there about the room, and foliage, brought from the woods, ornamented the walls, so that in a short time the place had assumed quite a festive appearance.

During the afternoon of this day, and while everybody in the fort seemed to be talking about him, Captain Sherwood made his appearance. He was pale, and looked fatigued; his uniform showed marks of hard usage, being badly torn and bespattered with blood.

An eager crowd was soon collected around him to listen to his exploits. All were greatly surprised upon learning that he had not been taken prisoner as was supposed. His story was as follows:

During the battle he had come in hand-to-hand combat with an Indian who appeared to be the leader of the Tory party, as Iron Hand himself was not with them. He finally manured, after a hard contest, to wound the arm of his antagonist, whereupon the savage turned about and took to flight. The captain hotly pursued, and in a few moments, both were separated from the main body of the combatants in a secluded portion of the woods; however, the officer was fast gaining ground on the Indian, and in a few moments would have had him in his power, when suddenly he received

a shot from some unseen foe. Staggering forward he fell, and **this was the last he remembered.**

He had fainted, and when he recovered, he found himself prone in a hole in the earth about four or five feet deep, with a heap of hemlock boughs covering the top. The dirt had been just thrown out, and whoever had dug the hole had undoubtedly intended it for his grave. But they probably had been frightened away, and consequently left their work only half accomplished.

When the captain had thoroughly revived, and became aware of his situation, he managed to crawl out of the horrid place and drag himself to a stream near by, where he quaffed a draught which started his blood on the regular course again and restored vitality.

After bathing a wound in his leg—which was not serious, as the ball had merely cut the flesh—and bandaging it up with his handkerchief, he started for the garrison, where he had arrived, weak and exhausted from loss of blood and want of food.

Every attention was now paid to him, for Captain Sherwood had become a great favorite with all since his first entering the fort. The surgeon was summoned immediately to dress his wound, and the cooks of the garrison vied with each other in serving up their best dish for the gallant officer in the quickest possible time. The ladies offered their services also, but the captain declared that he would not have anything more done for him. He was as well as any of them, he said, having partaken of a good dinner, and to prove this, he marched to the mess-room and spent the remainder of the afternoon in assisting the fair ones arranging the hall for the evening entertainment.

And now, dear reader, while our hero is there amusing himself, let us transport ourselves from the fort to a pretty, white cottage, which stands half-way down the side of a large hill three miles in the distance.

It was near sunset. A sunset more brilliant than common. The western sky was filled with masses of colored clouds, on which gold and purple and blue mingled together in gorgeous magnificence; and in which the eye of the beholder could not fail to note the outlines of strange forms, and fancy them

l, and bright and glorious beings of another world. It was a picture to gladden the eye, to give joy to the heart that was sad, and make happier the happy.

All this beauty was not unobserved. Eyes were dwelling upon it—beautiful eyes—and yet there was a sadness in their look, that ill accorded with the picture on which they were gazing. Though apparently regarding the sunset, the thoughts which gave them expression were drawn from a far different source. The heart within was dwelling upon another object.

The owner of those eyes was a beautiful girl, or rather a fully-developed woman. She was tall and majestic, of soft graces and waving outlines. The lady was Imogene Lear. She was walking backward and forward in a little garden at the back of the house, as if waiting for the arrival of some one.

Every now and then her eyes sought the grove of cedars at the foot of the inclosure, through whose slender trunks gleamed the silvery surface of a stream. Upon this spot they rested from time to time, with an expression of strange interest. No wonder that to those eyes that was an interesting spot—it was there where love's first vows had been uttered and two young hearts plighted forever.

Often as she gazed at this place a look of sadness would steal over her face as if some thought were flying through her brain that was unpleasant, and it brought with it clouds upon her brow, and imparted an air of uneasiness. What was that thought?

Ah! a stern father cursed it. No longer could she meet that lover, who had rendered this grove sacred, openly as in former times, but was obliged to resort to deceit and have their interviews in secret.

Sometimes she had been half tempted to forsake her home and go with Edgar Sherwood. But no, she could not do that; sober thought always brought her back to reason, and she would determine again to stay by him and tend him in his old age, for she was his only child and comfort, and then before this trouble he had ever been very kind to her and undoubtedly, ere long, he would relent and give his consent to her marriage with Edgar.

Such were the thoughts she consoled herself with.

Imogene Lear was naturally open and frank, and the de-

cent which she now practiced on her father was something altogether new and foreign to her noble nature, and it troubled her exceedingly, but then her love for Edgar Sherwood was strong, and love prevailed over conscience.

While continuing her walk up and down the garden path she stopped short, as if having taken some sudden resolution.

"I will go—I ought to gratify him!" she muttered to herself. Sitting down upon a bench near by, and opening a folded slip of paper, she read:

"DEAR IMOGENE—I have just returned from the war-path safe, and wish to see you very much. We are to have a ball at the garrison to-night. You must come—do not refuse, dearest one. If you do I shall be miserable all the evening. As soon as your father has retired for the night, hasten to our old place of meeting with your brave steed, where I shall be in waiting. Adieu, my dearest, for a few hours. E."

When she had finished reading the note, she pressed it to her lips and kissed it fervently.

"No, Edgar, I will not refuse: I will go!" she murmured, and thrusting the letter into her bosom, she glided softly into the house.

A few hours after sunset, and when it was dark, Imogene again stole forth into the garden. This time she was closely muffled in an ample cloak and her head was donned with a riding-hat.

After proceeding a short distance she stopped and listened. Perfect stillness reigned around the cottage. Then there came a low whistle from the lower end of the garden, and she tripped along over the sanded walk to the place, on reaching which she called:

"Jeff?"

"Here, lady," answered a man, stepping a little more into the light. He was her trusty servant.

"All saddled?"

"Yes, Miss Imogene."

"Is *he* here?"

"Out there on the road waiting."

The man assisted his mistress to mount, and the next moment, giving her steed a tap with her whip, she dashed away to meet her lover.

nothing. As Edgar and Imogene met, their eyes sparkled with the thought of love, but neither gave utterance to their thoughts until their horses had borne them away from the cottage.

Edgar was the first to speak.

“Were you intending to ride over to the garrison to-night, Imogene?” he said.

“No, not until I received your note.”

“My note?” and Edgar looked puzzled.

“Yes.”

“Why, Imogene, I sent you no note.”

“I have got it in my pocket.”

“Let me see it.”

She handed the note to him which she had received, and he ran his eye over the contents.

He looked astonished.

“By Heavens!” he exclaimed, “somebody is plotting against us; but, thank God, I was in time to frustrate their plan!”

“Then you really did not write it?” and Imogene appeared frightened.

“I never saw this note before—I did not even know you were going to the fort until I met your servant on the edge of the grove, who said you would be ready in a few moments, and then hastened away before I could speak to him.”

“Who could have done this? Oh, Edgar, I fear there is some dreadful mystery about this!”

“No, no, Imogene! there is nothing of the kind,” he said, observing her alarm; “do not let this frighten you. Undoubtedly some one of your servants did this with no good design, but he will not dare try the same trick again.”

Here a new thought seemed to enter Imogene’s brain and she asked, quickly:

“Your dream, Edgar? has any thing come from it?”

“No,” replied he, forcing a laugh; “how foolish I was to let a silly dream trouble me!”

“I am very glad; it annoyed me much.”

“Let it be forgotten, dearest, for it was nothing more than a common dream, although at the time I was quite certain it was a vision—a presentiment.”

They were now entering a straggling patch of woods, which stood at either side of the road but a short distance from the

fort. Imogene was about to speak again, when her quick ear caught a sound that appeared odd to her. It was but a slight rustling among the autumnal leaves that were lying in heaps along the roadside, and might have been caused by the wind had there been any, but not a breath was stirring. Something else had caused it. What could it be?

Edgar and Imogene turned their heads simultaneously and looked behind. At the same moment each caught a glance of the face and form they had seen a few nights previous in the grove near the cottage—the face that Edgar had declared he had seen in his dream! There it stood in the middle of the road, wrapped in a white, shaggy cloak, which gave the mysterious form a frightful appearance, and the face, pale and motionless, gazing after them.

In a moment it had disappeared, and Edgar and Imogene each drew a long breath. Captain Edgar Sherwood was no coward—was a brave man, and had often stood face to face with death; but this was an apparition, something mysterious which he could not understand. His lips grew white, and the perspiration leaped into drops upon his forehead. He was about to turn his horse's head and ride back to where the specter had stood, but Imogene was very much agitated, and urged him forward to the fort.

Around the entrance of the garrison a large crowd of soldiers were collected, to observe the guests as they arrived, and when Edgar and Imogene passed through the men gave them a loud and hearty cheer. This seemed to awaken the couple from the lethargy into which they had fallen after beholding the apparition.

Dismounting, they hurried to the ball room, where they found a gay assembly. The hall was brilliantly lighted and handsomely decorated. The music, which consisted of the regimental band, was playing a waltz, while a throng of dancers whirled round the room.

There was a large number of persons present, composed of the officers and their ladies, and the patriots dwelling in the neighbourhood. It was a merry company, and one that seemed to dispel all troubles from the minds of our hero and heroine.

Imogene had hardly entered the room before she became

the center of attraction. The captain led her to the upper end of the room, where they joined Colonel Hall, the commander of the garrison, and his lady.

Now it was that the wound in his leg annoyed the captain, for it kept him from engaging in the dance with Imogene. In order to keep the knowledge of this from her, he was obliged to find a partner for her among the lieutenants. A lucky accident for them, and the fortunate one appreciated it, too.

While the dance was going on, and when the company seemed in the light of enjoyment, a man dressed in the garb of a hunter, entered the hall, and forced his way to the colonel. It was a noted American spy, Hank Putney by name, who had been dispatched the day previous to search for Captain Sherwood. He whispered a few words to the commander, and both retired from the room together, but so quietly that no one perceived them.

Upon leaving the hall, they directed their steps to the colonel's head-quarters, where the following conversation took place between them:

"You say that you have news of importance, Putney?" said the colonel, handing the scout a seat.

"Indeed, very important, colonel," answered Putney, taking a folded paper from his pocket and laying it upon the table. "If ye'll just run yer eye over that, perhaps ye'll understand what it is."

Colonel Hall took up the paper, and with some difficulty managed to read the poorly-written and badly-spelled document. It was a description of the notorious Iron Hand.

"Well, really, this is good news, Putney. How did you succeed in obtaining a sight of him?"

"Oh, easy enough! The band forgot to cover their trail this time, and I tracked 'em. But look ye again at th' paper. Do ye not know him? You've seen him a hundred times."

The colonel read the description over again carefully, then paused for a moment in thought.

"There is a man in the garrison," said he, "who answers to this description, but then of course we should be mad to think it meant Captain Edgar Sherwood!"

"I thought ye'd know him!" said Putney, and his eye twinkled with satisfaction. "No madness about it, colonel.

He's the man—this villain Iron Hand and our cap'n are one!"

"Why, man, it is impossible!" cried the colonel, starting to his feet, with astonishment. "What! Sherwood a British spy! No, no, no!"

"Sartin, sir, sartin! Bill Hawkins and I saw him in their camp yesterday, and he war their leader. I took down his description, and we'll sw'ar to it."

Colonel Hall paced up and down the floor in great agitation. Every little circumstance which had taken place during the past few days again appeared to him, but in a changed form. After a few moments' thought, he was obliged to admit that some things had transpired which looked suspicious. Sherwood's story about being nearly buried, might be only a fabulous invention gotten up to cloak his real actions, and the wound, perchance, he may have received in the fray.

It also occurred to him now, that Sherwood, during the past month, had been frequently absent from the fort, sometimes for a day and night together. Then, again, the father of his betrothed, Thomas Lear, was known to be a stanch Tory, and although it was reported that Sherwood and he had quarreled when the former entered the American army, yet this might have been done for the purpose of carrying out their deception.

"I suspect that's why the cap'n was late with th' soldiers th' night th' Tories attacked the Whig's house, 'cause he war waitin' for 'em to finish th' job," said Putney, adding additional fuel to the fire.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the colonel, stopping short in his walk. "Have we all been blinded by this villain? Can it really be that Sherwood is a traitor?"

"He's Iron Hand, I'm sure o' that!" again added Putney.

"Well, man," Colonel Hall turned about so as to face the scout, "I shall have him arrested at once, but if it turns out that the charge is false, you shall be punished in his stead. Now I ask you once more, are you sure he is the man?"

Putney turned very pale, but answered:

"I am."

The colonel then dispatched him for an officer. In a short

time, guards began to appear at the different places of ingress and exit to the ball-room. The assembly noticed this and the dance stopped suddenly. A sergeant entered the room, and informed Captain Sherwood that the colonel requested his presence. The company stood still with astonishment. What had happened—were the British approaching?

In a moment the news spread like wild fire in the assembly, that Captain Edgar Sherwood was arrested, and imprisoned on a charge of being the Tory chieftain, Iron Hand, and a British spy! At this announcement, a loud shriek burst forth from the upper end of the room, and Imogene Lear sunk fainting to the floor.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NIGHT RIDE.

THE night had turned out dark and drear, and the lowering clouds denoted the approach of a storm. The last echo of the booming gun had scarcely died away, warning the inmates of the fort that it was time for all unnecessary lights to be extinguished, and for all nightly revels to cease.

The shrill cry of the sentinel's "All's well" had passed from mouth to mouth, denoting the security of the hour, and the non-apprehension of an attack. The lights in the different quarters were gradually extinguished, showing a reluctance of the occupants to abandon their evening amusements.

As the last glimmer died away, the battlements of the fort were wrapped in an almost impenetrable gloom. Nothing broke the deathlike stillness, save the measured tread of the guard as he walked his lonely post, or the hooting of the owl, as it rung upon the silence of the night from the depth of the the neighboring forest.

Suddenly one of the portern gates opposite the residence of the commandant was thrown open, from which issued a flood of light, making the surrounding darkness more intense, and revealing a small group of officers and ladies, on the countenances of whom were depicted gloom and sadness,

caused by the extraordinary and unlooked for proceedings of the earlier part of the evening. They had just emerged from their dwelling to witness the departure of Miss Lear, after having made ineffectual efforts to induce her to postpone her journey till morning.

Imogene, wrapped in a heavy military cloak, and leaning upon the arm of the garrison commander, followed by the rest of the company, moved toward her steed, which, in charge of one of the soldiers, stood outside of the gate, champing his bit and pawing the ground impatiently.

Refusing all proffered assistance, she leaped gayly into the saddle, and tried, by assuming a more genial appearance which ill-bespoke the agony that wrung her heart, to banish the thoughts that clouded the brows and dampened the feelings of all present.

Her horse, a noble animal of coal-black color, long, flowing tail and mane, with limbs of most delicate proportions, and whose general symmetry of form defied the criticism of the most observant, and denoted a capability of excessive endurance, feeling again his accustomed burden, seemed to partake of the happier moments of his mistress, and commenced to curvet and gambol about to the extreme annoyance of his attendant.

After portraying to Imogene the numerous dangers that might befall her on the road, Colonel Hall made an urgent but fruitless appeal to her to remain at the fort during the night, or else to accept of an escort to her father's house. With an ill-affected smile, Imogene tried to allay the apprehensions of her friends by making light of them, then waving a parting farewell to the assembled company, in a few moments afterward she was buried in the gloom.

The assemblage waited until the rattling of her horse's hoofs had died away in the distance, then slowly returned to the apartment which they had left a few minutes previous. Each member of the assembly seemed deeply engaged with his own respective thoughts, the uppermost of which was, no doubt, the surprising scenes that had transpired during the evening.

The silence was finally broken by Colonel Hall, who had been for several moments seemingly absorbed in a deep,

meditative mood, turning abruptly toward a young officer, who, in a fit of abstraction, was standing with one arm leaning on the mantel, whom he addressed as follows:

"Lieutenant Mansfield, I have resolved to dispatch a body of horse to follow the direction taken by Miss Lear, in case she should be molested, as I have apprehensions of the safety of the route which she must traverse, for you are aware that it is only a few days ago that those three Tory spies, now hanged in the bastion, were captured in the vicinity of her father's residence. Should it be agreeable, I will give the command of the troops to you; but remember, the matter is optional."

"Colonel, I am at your service, and nothing would be more pleasing to me than to be the protector of virtue, and if possible, in the performance of my duty, to rid the country of some of those bloodthirsty desperadoes that are such a scourge to society."

"Those are soldierly sentiments, lieutenant," answered Colonel Hall.

"The sentiments of the entire garrison," responded the lieutenant.

"I am pleased to learn that such chivalrous feelings pervade the breasts of the men under my command," said the colonel; "however, lieutenant, as the time passes rapidly by, and several minutes have already elapsed since the departure of Miss Lear, it would be well to make preparations as speedily as possible."

The lieutenant making a low bow, retired to perform the wishes of his commander. In a moment afterward, the troopers, armed to the teeth, and mounted on their caparisoned chargers, looking like so many grim specters, dashed through the open gate and were soon lost to view. The gate creaked on its rusty hinges as it swung back into its customary place, and silence again reigned supreme.

CHAPTER V.

THE RED WITNESS.

IMOGENE, after her departure from the fort, sped rapidly onward, heedless of the extended branches and immense brambles that threatened every moment to drag her from her saddle. Collecting her confused thoughts, which were exceedingly harassed by her multiplied troubles, she checked the impetuosity of her steed, and compelling him to assume a more moderate gait, fell into a revery.

"Can it be possible," she murmured, "that Colonel Hall could have had any intimation of impending danger? he seemed to persist so strongly that I should remain in the fort till daylight!" Immediately recovering herself, she exclaimed:

"A truce to such thoughts! It is only the wandering of my disordered imagination, that turns every harmless tree into a robber, and every neighboring bush into the lurking-place of some concealed assassin. However, I must confess that when I first entered the forest, an indescribable feeling of dread seemed to chill my very blood; but I must scout such ideas, which if I do not, they will entirely unnerve me, and render me unfit to enter the presence of my father, who must not receive from me even the slightest suspicion of Edgar's misfortune."

In vain did she endeavor to shake off the gloomy feeling that possessed her. The moon, which had been concealed during the earlier part of the evening behind the immense banks of clouds that had obscured the heavens, now became occasionally visible, and its fitful beams served only to render the intense darkness of the woods more apparent, and lend a more spectral appearance to surrounding objects.

Imogene, having relapsed into her former mood, rode slowly along the well-beaten path, unmindful of the cold, keen wind that swept through the surging forest, causing the stanch old oaks to gently bend their hoary tops to the blast.

The deep baying of her father's hounds awakened her, at length, from her musings. Congratulating herself upon having reached the terminus of her journey in safety, she tried to smile at the absurd fears of her friends, when her steed, with a snort of terror, made a sudden pause, throwing himself back on his haunches, almost unseating his mistress.

Imogene peered into the darkness beyond, but in consequence of the intensity of the gloom, was unable to ascertain the cause of her horse's fear, and vainly endeavored to urge her trembling animal forward, at first, by gently applications of the whip, and finally by kind words and caresses, but with like success. It was with the utmost difficulty that she succeeded in calming his excitement, and preventing him from dashing headlong into the surrounding woods.

At that moment, the moon, which had been hidden for a short time by a passing cloud, again burst forth, lighting up the surrounding darkness, and by the aid of the few faint beams that struggled through the dense foliage overhead, Imogene perceived a man at a few yards distant, standing on the side of the road, partly concealed behind a tree.

Seeing that he was discovered, he stepped into the middle of the path, as if he desired to speak. He appeared to be advanced in years, with long, flowing, silvery locks, and with little or no beard. His frame was still strong and sinewy, though somewhat bent, apparently both by age and toil. His countenance, however, bore but few traces of either age or suffering, and had quite a prepossessing look, were it not for the expression of his eyes, which were cold and repelling, but with a glance sharp and piercing that seemed to read the inmost secrets of any object on which it was cast.

These organs were nearly concealed by a pair of black, shaggy brows, that ill accorded with the excessive whiteness of their owner's hair. The stranger, noticing the anxious and half-dreadful look of Imogene, broke the silence by saying:

"Young lady, be not afraid; I am but a poor, harmless old man who has been travelling nearly the entire day over hill and dale, and am only seeking some fit habitation where I may rest my weary limbs."

Imogene gazed upon the singular being before her, for some moments in silence, unable to utter a word, so sudden was the shock of his unexpected appearance. Recovering herself at length, she replied :

"For what reason, my good sir, are you, at such an hour in a place so isolated. Do you not fear any danger?"

"I entered these woods to seek shelter from the impending storm which threatened to take place during the earlier part of the evening," he answered. "As for danger, why should I fear? Who would think of injuring a harmless old man like me? No, no, these freebooters of the road look for higher game than I, in my poverty, could offer!"

These last words were uttered in such a sarcastic tone that Imogene, who had been adjusting her horse's bridle, looked up with astonishment and bent her penetrating gaze upon the speaker, but seeing his harmless and abject appearance, her features relaxed and softened into a look of pity.

Desiring to terminate the conversation, she said :

"My friend, these woods are not a suitable spot for either of us, and as you remarked that you were seeking for a place of shelter and safety, I will direct you where your wishes will be gratified. Follow this path, without deviating either to the right or left, and you will reach the habitation of my father, where you will find a place to rest yourself. Lead on, I will follow."

Up to this moment, the stranger had not moved from the position he had first assumed; but seeing the intention of Imogene to proceed, he drew back a step and raised his hand, motioning her to stop. She did as he requested.

"Before I accept your kind invitation," continued the old man, "I would wish to know, good lady, to whose generosity I am indebted; whether it be friend or foe."

"That matters not," replied Imogene; "it is sufficient that you are homeless and in want. I consider not whether the recipient of my charity be friend or enemy, neither do I care. You seek assistance, and that assistance I offer you—what more is necessary? I am not your enemy, nor do I bear hostile feeling to anybody. Let this answer suffice."

The energy with which Imogene uttered those words caused the rich blood to suffuse her countenance, which lent

an additional charm to her excessive beauty. The stranger cast an admiring look upon the beautiful young girl, but it passed like a flash as he resumed the conversation.

"Young lady, pray forgive my hesitancy; but, as you are aware, in these troublesome times a man is at a loss to know whom to trust, and I am afraid that should I fall into the hands of some, I might receive a reception disagreeable to my nature," at this he turned an inquisitive look upon his companion, as if he sought to elicit a reply to his somewhat equivocal answer.

"You doubt, then, the honesty of my hospitable offers," returned Imogene, with some animation.

"No, no, young lady; you misconstrue my meaning. I doubt not your upright intentions; but, as I said before, you know a person can not be too scrupulous in these matters."

"In order not to deprive you of the comforts which you seem to need, I will endeavor to dispel your ungrounded fears by giving you the requisite information. The house to which I have directed you is the residence of Thomas Lear, and—"

At the last-mentioned name, the stranger started back with a look of surprise.

"Then you are Imogene, the daughter of old Lear, the Tory?" he exclaimed.

These words were uttered in a much different key. A strong, manly voice had taken the place of the weak, wheezing tone of the old man. The hot blood mantled the brow of Imogene, as she quickly retorted to this seemingly insulting language:

"Though Thomas Lear should be a supporter of the king's cause, his daughter, at least, should be free from insult. He is my father, and I wish not to hear his name spoken of in so wanton and disrespectful a manner. I have directed you to a harbor of safety, where you may find a place of rest, and provide for your wants. If you wish to avail yourself of my offer you may do so, but you must use your own discretion in the matter. I have already tarried too long—I must depart."

"A word with you, Miss Lear, for since you have acknowledged yourself to be, before you go," replied the stranger; and drawing nearer to Imogene, he whispered, in a subdued

undertone, a few words which seemed to make her recoil with an expression of horror.

"Away, vile wretch! Is it thus you would repay my kindness? Begone!" She cast upon him such a look of disgust and contempt that he seemed to writhe under her stinging rebuff.

"You reject, then, my offer?" he replied.

"I refuse to parley with such a despicable creature. Make way; I must leave this spot."

"Not quite so fast, young lady. I wish to allow you a moment to reconsider your decision," returned the old man without moving from his position in the center of the path.

"You have heard my answer."

"You persist in your refusal?"

"I do."

The stranger gave a low, short whistle, and immediately disappeared in the brushwood. Before Imogene could recover from her surprise at this sudden disappearance, her horse's bridle was seized by an armed ruffian, while two others confronted her with drawn weapons. Imogene was immediately alive to the danger that threatened her.

"What means this outrage—this detention?" she exclaimed in an excited manner.

"It means," returned one of the party, who appeared to be the leader, in a gruff voice, "that you're our prisoner."

At this juncture one of the men raised his hand as a signal for all to remain silent. In an instant every one assumed a listening attitude, intent on catching the slightest sound. At first nothing could be heard, save the sighing of the wind through the trees, but the practiced ears of the desperadoes quickly distinguished the clatter of approaching hoofs.

"What's that?" exclaimed the man who had given the signal of alarm, casting an inquiring look at his leader.

"It's a party o' those cursed rebels from the fort, and we must into the woods until they pass, or they'll be on our backs in no time."

As he said this, he turned toward Imogene, and, drawing a pistol from his belt, ordered her to dismount.

"Dismount, I tell ye," cried the ruffian, in a voice husky with rage, seeing that Imogene utterly disregarded his com-

and, "or by th' light o' Heaven, I'll put this piece o' lead through yer brain; for I've promised to deliver yer body, dead or alive, and I'll do so, should it cost me my life."

Imogene looked at the villain, and saw by the fierce expression of his countenance and the malignant fire that sparkled in his eye, that he was capable of any enormity possible to humanity, and would not hesitate an instant to put **his threat into execution.**

There was no one to succor her; she beheld only the other villains, his accomplices in crime. Oh, how she wished that her noble Edgar was by her side, were it but for a moment.

"Make haste," exclaimed the ruffian, impatiently.

"I refuse," replied Imogene, with vehemence.

In an instant, before she could divine their intention, a large mantle was suddenly cast over her head to prevent her from making any outcry, and she was forcibly dragged from her saddle and borne into the woods. In a moment afterward the man who had held the rein of Imogene's steed, uttering a cry of pain, dashed after them.

"What's all this noise about?" sharply asked the ruffian leader, casting a savage look upon his comrade.

"The horse! the horse!" was all he could ejaculate, and holding up his hand which was sadly cut and mangled, "see there," he cried, with an oath, "that infernal brute almost wrenched my arm out of its socket with his teeth," and holding tightly on the wounded member, he groaned aloud **with the excruciating pain.**

"Ye'd better stop that howlin' o' yours, afore ye bring th' whole rebel pack down upon us," was the consoling remark. The wounded man, with a look of pain and hatred, obeyed.

The heavy tramp of horses denoted the rapid advance of the troopers, and the bushes had hardly closed on the form of the last of the retreating rascals, when they rode swiftly by the hiding place of their foe, looking like so many ghostly images, as the moonbeams faintly reflected on their clanking sabers, and the garnished trappings of their steeds.

When the last sound of the retreating horsemen had died away in the distance, the leader of the party noiselessly emerged from his place of concealment, and took a short, **quick survey of the surroundings.**

Upon observing their freedom from all immediate danger, and he ordered his companions to move with all possible expedition. Carefully placing the unconscious and almost inanimate form of Imogene on the back of his own horse, he exclaimed :

" Now, then, put yer horses to the test, for we must place many miles betwixt us and this spot afore daylight ; for that bloody red-skin, War Cloud, is at th' fort, and if he gets on our trail, only a miracle 'll save us from goin' under. Should th' rebel dogs overtake us, they'll show us no quarters."

In obedience to the command of their captain, one of the party rode some distance in advance, in order to keep a sharp lookout for any signs of danger ; the leader with his helpless burden occupied the center ; while the wounded man, who was engaged in binding up his lacerated hand, guarded the rear.

In this manner they proceeded for several miles in silence, not a sound breaking the deep and deathlike stillness of the forest, except the dull cchore of the horses' tread.

They had almost reached the verge of the woods through which they were traveling, and were about to enter upon the highway, in order to pursue their way more rapidly, trusting to the darkness as a safeguard against their being observed, and the proximity of the woods into which they could plunge in case of the approach of any suspicious party, when the man in front gave a low whistle as a signal to halt.

Riding back to his companions, he pointed out to them through the trees, a faint, glimmering light that appeared to issue from a large house near the roadside, but so nearly hidden in an angle of the woods, that they almost came upon it unawares. This was no other than the residence of the old Whig who had been so cruelly murdered during the visit of Iron Hand's band the evening previous.

After debating among themselves for several moments the one who had first given the alarm agreed to go and reconnoiter the place. Dismounting, he hastened across the road, and disappeared in the clefts of the trees that nearly surrounded the habitation.

His friends, in their place of concealment, anxious to hear the result. After an elapse of about half an hour he returned,

and informed his comrades that the house was apparently empty, and that the inmates had either fled or been taken captives, as he had minutely examined several of the apartments, and there was not a single sound to denote the presence of any living being about the premises.

At this piece of intelligence, the three ruffians concluded that instead of proceeding further on their journey, as both themselves and their horses were greatly fatigued by their rapid travelling, to take up their abode for the remainder of the night in their newly-discovered place of shelter.

The trio advanced cautiously until they reached the house, where they dismounted and securely fastened their animals. The horses, together with the still insensible person of Imogene, were left in charge of the woman member of the party, while the other two entered the building.

All was silence within. At the end of a large hall into which they had ushered themselves, was a wide stair-case leading to the room where the light was first discovered. Looking into several smaller apartments without seeing any suspicious sign, the two worthies concluded that the place was still unoccupied, and immediately prepared to proceed to the room above, in order to ascertain the cause of the light which they had seen.

As they ascended, the stairs creaked and groaned, sending forth at every step a hollow, dismal sound, whose echoes broke the monotonous stillness, and lent additional horror to the deep gloom that pervaded the entire place.

Entering the chamber, a scene of terrible confusion was spread before their eyes. Broken and disarranged furniture was scattered in every direction, while on the end of the mantel near one of the windows, stood a light with the flame just flickering in the socket. This it was that first attracted the attention of the abducting party.

It was obvious by the great disorder everywhere visible, that the inmates had decamped in haste, as not a single piece of furniture had been removed, and that the house had been recently abandoned, either in consequence of a real or expected attack.

It was also apparent that the place had not been deserted more than an hour or two. Evidently the last resident

entertained little apprehension of an unwelcome visit, as the light in the apartment was so placed that its rays could be easily distinguished by the least observant passing that way.

Could it be that the inmates had heard their approach and had secreted themselves until they had fairly entrapped their victims? As this thought suggested itself to the minds of the two ruffians, a cold perspiration bathed their brows, and they were on the point of beating a hasty retreat; but being reassured by the prevailing quietude, they endeavored, with an air of assumed bravado, to rally their drooping courage.

In a noiseless, but faltering manner, they commenced an examination of the apartment. One of them gave a sudden bound, accidentally knocking over a chair in his fright, as he trod on some small, hard object lying on the floor.

"Curse on ye!" exclaimed his companion, in a tone of mingled alarm and anger, "ye'll bring th' whole neighborhood about our ears."

Assuring themselves, however, that the noise had not aroused anybody, they continued their search. As the ruffian who had been startled so suddenly, stooped down to ascertain the cause of his alarm, the dim rays of the candle reflected on a richly-mounted dagger.

He picked it up, and was about to place it in his girdle, when his comrade, the leader of the party, who was watching his movements, caught sight of the glittering blade.

"What's that?" he asked, as he rudely grasped the arm of the other.

"Only a knife."

"By heavens, I've seen that knife afore!" he soliloquized, as they both minutely examined the instrument by the aid of the candle's faint and flickering flame.

The handle of the weapon was tastefully ornamented with mother-of-pearl and several beautiful and sparkling brilliants, denoting that the owner was of no ordinary rank. They held it closer to the light in order to inspect what appeared to be spots of rust on the keen but peculiar-shaped blade.

"Blood! as I'm a livin' man."

"And fresh blood at that," replied the other, as he scrutinized it more closely.

"See!" was the excited exclamation.

"What?"

"Those letters," answered the leader, as he pointed to the initials "I. H." handsomely engraved on the hilt of the weapon.

"Wal, what of 'em?"

"Don't yer know?"

After slowly repeating the letters over several times in his endeavors to unravel the enigma, the other quickly exclaimed:

"I have it—the knife's our chief's."

"Sartinly."

"Wonder how it came here?"

"Th' chief himself or some of th' league have been around and at work."

They then proceeded without delay to look about them for some traces of a *meurtre*. The walls were besmeared in several places with clots of blood, giving unmistakable signs of an encounter, while in the center of the floor was a small pool of human gore not yet dry, denoting that the victim, whether dead or wounded, had been but recently removed.

The expiring flame of the candle threw a sickly glare over the apartment, wrapping every thing in a ghostly gloom. The ruffians, though steeled to scenes of blood and murder, could not drive away the indescribable feeling of awe that crept over them as they stood there alone.

The bloody weapon of their chieftain, the not-to-be-mistaken marks of a recent combat, the light, the deserted house with its entire contents intact—all these, to the minds of the ruffians, were an unbroken chain of circumstances which to them was an inexplicable mystery.

Murder and rapine in their direst forms they could look upon unflinchingly, but to be there alone, with nothing but the dumb and singular witnesses of the slaughtered victim around them, was more than their treacherous souls could withstand.

Filled with superstitious fears, they hastened precipitately down the stairs, casting occasional furtive glances behind them, and ceased not their hasty retreat until they had reached their horses, which quickly mounting, they drove their rowels

into their flanks and in a moment were dashing down the road in hurried flight.

Not a word was uttered until they were satisfied that they had placed themselves beyond the reach of all danger, real or imaginary, when they checked their steeds, and related to their wondering and almost bewildered comrade what they had seen.

After a short and silent ride, the party finally reached a small, but pretty and tasteful, dwelling, surrounded by neat and beautiful grounds. It presented no appearance of wanton injury and desolation, and was quite a pleasing contrast to the numerous forsaken and half-burned houses that everywhere abounded in that part of the country.

This pleasant retreat was evidently abandoned by its former occupants, as the three ruffians approached it unhesitatingly, without using their customary precautions. The place was, no doubt, one of the many resorts belonging to the band of which these men were members, and had been spared from the general waste to be reserved for this purpose.

Having made secure the apartment in which Imogene was placed, so as to prevent escape, the trio, before a large, crackling wood fire which they had enkindled on the hearth, prepared to make themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

After discussing the creature's comforts with appetites rendered extremely sharp by their weary ride, two of the party, while the other mounted guard for the night, rolled themselves in their blankets and were soon buried in slumber.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOT TRAIL.

AFTER leaving the fort, the dragoons followed the well-worn but solitary path leading to the residence of Mr. Lear, which they were certain Imogene had taken.

Onward they swiftly rode, hoping at every moment to overtake their intended charge. Though they frequently listened to catch the slightest sound, however, nothing was audible save the monotonous rattling of their sabers.

The deep baying of hounds, the same that had awakened Imogene from her reverie, told them they were near their journey's end. In a few moments afterward the dragoons drew up their prancing steeds before the residence of Thomas Lear.

All was still. The lieutenant dismounted and rapped loudly on the door with the hilt of his saber. Finding that the summons was unanswered, he repeated his rap with redoubled vehemence. The echo had hardly died away when the door was partly opened, and a negro domestic peering cautiously out inquired the reason of their visit at such an unseemly hour.

Hearing, in reply to her question, the deep, heavy tones of a man's voice, and seeing the person himself garbed in the habiliments of a continental soldier, she was about to quickly close the door in her fright; but the assurance that she was to be in no wise molested filled her with more confidence, and after some hesitancy she admitted the strange visitors.

Upon making inquiries, the lieutenant was astounded to find that Imogene had not yet returned, and was on the point of dispatching some of his men to scour the woods in the vicinity, when her stout, ribbed and with saddle and girth nearly torn from his back, came dashing up the lawn.

Mr. Lear, on hearing the loud tones of the conversation carried on below, hurried down-stairs. Seeing a party of soldiers congregated before his house, his mind was filled with forebodings of some impending calamity.

"What is the meaning of this unseasonable visit?" he eagerly inquired, turning to the lieutenant of the dragoons.

"We have come in obedience to the command of Colonel Hall, to ascertain whether Miss Lear has yet arrived from the fort, which she persisted in leaving this evening unattended.

"Imogene at the fort! What mean you—how came she there?"

"She was at the ball, sir."

"At the ball! You mystify me—explain yourself;" but just at that moment, catching sight of the riderless steed, he started back with an agonizing groan. "I understand," he murmured, "something has happened to Imogene."

"Indeed, sir, I fear there has been foul play."

"No, no, there must be some dreadful mistake here!" exclaimed the old man, nervously grasping the arm of the officer. "Who could be so base as to harm my child?"

"In truth, the affair is enveloped in profound mystery. We have examined the horse and find no traces of blood, and I greatly fear that your daughter has been—"

"What?" cried Mr. Lear, seeing the soldier hesitate.

"Abducted."

"Oh! my God! what new villainy is this!" and the sorrow-stricken parent staggered at the fearful intelligence. Clutching the lieutenant with feverish suddenness, he frantically exclaimed:

"Oh! save my daughter, my darling girl! Reclaim her from the hands of those merciless fiends, and my property, my life, my all is yours! Oh! my child! my child! my child!" and with a heartrending cry, the poor afflicted father reeled, then sunk to the floor.

Leaving the grief-stricken old man in the care of his weeping servants, with the assurance that nothing would be left undone to recover Miss Lear from the hands of her abductors, the lieutenant vaulted into his saddle, and in company with his men hurried back to the fort to impart to the commandant the unwelcome news.

"Lieutenant," said Colonel Hall, after the officer had related to him what had taken place, "you will hold yourself and command in readiness to start at break of day, in pursuit of these villains."

The dragoon was about departing, when the colonel stopped him.

"The Indian, War Cloud, is still in the garrison, is he not?" he asked.

"He is, sir."

"Send him to me, then, without delay."

The officer bowed and retired. The Indian quickly obeyed the summons.

War-Cloud was a chief of the Oneidas. Although a great part of his tribe went over to the British with the Five Nations, of which it was a member, he always remained a staunch friend of the Americans, and an inveterate foe of the Mohawks.

He was one of the most trustworthy scouts attached to the Continental army, and in that capacity had performed invaluable service in the cause of liberty.

To Captain Sherwood he was especially attached, and would have been ready at any moment to sacrifice his life in his behalf. A large, crackling wood-fire shed its rays about the room which he entered.

As the Indian stood there, calmly awaiting the pleasure of his commander, with his arms quietly folded on his breast, with the beautiful war-plumes that decorated his head drooping over his countenance so as to give a more somber shade to his finely-molded features, he looked like some brazen colossus and the *lata-ideal* of a true warrior.

Colonel Hall was pacing up and down the apartment, deeply absorbed in meditation. He stopped a moment and looked up.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as he beheld his visitor, "you have come!"

Placing a chair near the table for the scout, he seated himself opposite.

"I suppose you are aware of the reason that has caused me to send for you?" continued the colonel.

The Indian bowed in response.

"You have already heard of the abduction of Miss Lear?"

"War-Cloud knows all," answered the scout.

"Then you will hold yourself ready to accompany the troopers on the trail of the abductors in the morning." Af-

ter giving the Indian his instructions, the commander dismissed him.

The remainder of the night was spent by a greater part of the inmates of the fort, in a state of feverish excitement. It was deemed prudent to withhold the knowledge of Imogene's abduction from Captain Sherwood, until more particulars of her fate were obtained.

The next morning, just as the bright sun commenced to tint the neighboring hill-tops and light up the eastern horizon, witnessed the departure of the dragoons from the fort.

They immediately took the path of the previous evening, which they slowly followed, scrutinizing every foot of the ground minutely, until they reached the spot where Imogene had been stopped by her abductors. This they knew by the trampled state of the earth.

Dismounting, War-Cloud made a careful examination of the numerous footprints, while the remainder of the company patiently awaited the result of his investigation.

Quickly beckoning the commander to his side, the scout pointed to several deep prints in the soft soil.

"Well, what's peculiar about them?" asked the officer, inspecting them closely.

"White man's tracks."

"White men's! How know you that?"

"See!" exclaimed the scout, as he directed the officer's attention to several nearly erased marks, "Indian no wear boots—Indian wear moccasin."

Sure enough, there, in the loose earth, were imprinted the faint outlines of boot-tracks. Penetrating the trampled bushes on either side of the path, War-Cloud at length came upon the spot where the innumerate form of Imogene had been placed during the passage of the dragoons.

These signs not only satisfied the party that they had struck upon the right trail, but also gave convincing proof that the abductors were white men, not Indians, as at first supposed.

Without stopping to waste any more time in words, the dragoons started on the trail, with War-Cloud a short distance in advance. The tracks of the fugitives were so broad and plain, and so little care had been taken to conceal them, that they could be followed with but little difficulty.

dis- However, as the troopers entered deeper into the heart of
the forest, their progress became slower and more difficult, and
art the trail less distinct.

nt. At length, however, they reached the deserted house where
the abducting party had stopped the previous evening. They
ro- surrounded the building, but this precaution was unnecessary,
a- as a hasty examination showed that their intended victims had
to departed several hours before.

ri- The old trail was again resumed, which led them to the
dwelling in which we left Imogene and her abductors in the
g, previous chapter.

re It was now dark, and the obscurity and quietude in which
the house was buried seemed to foreshadow another disap-
pointment. The lieutenant knocked loudly at the door; no
e answer. He knocked again; still no answer. He was about
to effect an entrance by force, when the shadow of a man was
observed to flit across the lawn.

t The dragoons started in hurried pursuit. Through the dim
twilight the fugitive was hardly distinguishable. He had al-
most reached the woods—in another moment he would be
safe, when the sharp, whip-like report of War-Cloud's rifle
was heard, and the fleeing man fell to the dust.

The next instant he was surrounded by his pursuers, who
made a litter for him with their rifles, and carried him to the
house. The injured man was bleeding copiously, and ap-
peared to be seriously, if not mortally wounded.

"Who are you, and what were you doing here?" inquired
the lieutenant, after seeing that the sufferer's position had been
made as comfortable as possible.

"What's thet to ye?" was the surly reply.

"Come, come, my good fellow, you had better be a little
more communicative, for I think your time is growing short."

"What's thet ye say?" exclaimed the man, with a sudden
start.

"I fear your injury is fatal."

"Do ye think so?"

"I do."

"If thet's the case, Tom Turley had better tell all afore he
goes under, for he hez a party good deal thet weighs on his
mind."

"Be brief."

"Send yer cap'n to me; I'll tell no other."

"I am the sole commander here."

To this the man uttered a guttural, unintelligible response and then remained quiet. The lieutenant perceived that nothing could be elicited from him, except by the closest interrogating.

"Who are you?"

"I'm one of the Tory League," answered the man, in a low whisper.

At the mention of this name, a scowl darkened the brows of the dragoons that were crowded around.

"How came you with that wound?" asked the officer, seeing one of the hands of the Tory ill-bandaged and bloody.

"I got bit by a horse belongin' to a gal thet myself and **two more of the band wor carryin' off.**"

"What!" exclaimed the lieutenant, springing suddenly to his feet; "you, then, were one of the abductors of Miss Lear?"

"Thet's the name, but—quick—water! water!" A drink was immediately given him.

"Who were your companions, and where are they? Tell me what has become of Miss Lear!" but before any reply could be made to these questions, a short, burly individual, a surgeon, had elbowed his way through the crowd and reached the wounded man.

He had accompanied the dragoons on the expedition, evidently more for the sake of adventure than from any expectation that his medical services would be required.

He had joined in the pursuit on foot, and it was several minutes after the dragoons had returned to the house, before he made his appearance.

Thrusting back the men who were collected around, eager to hear what the Tory had to say, he proceeded to examine the man's wound.

The ball had entered the upper part of the shoulder, but striking the blade, had taken a downward course and come out at the back.

"It's only a flesh wound," said the surgeon, after he had finished bandaging the injury; "the man has bled profusely,

which has made him weak, but in a few hours he will be all right again."

"What! then I'll yet live?" exclaimed the man, with a nervous shudder, a deathlike pallidness overspreading his countenance.

"Why, certainly! you are worth a dozen dying men."

At these words the man sunk back with a groan.

"But, my good fellow, why do you speak in this manner?" asked the surgeon; "you don't wish to die, do you?"

"He's one of the Tory League, doctor, and thought he wor goin' under," ventured to say one of the soldiers.

"One of the Tory League, eh?" exclaimed the surgeon, with a look of surprise. "Ah! I understand his wish to die; he's afraid that he has escaped one mode of dying to suffer a worse, which he has deserved a hundred times for his black deeds."

With an almost superhuman effort, the wounded man sprung to his feet, his face livid with passion.

"Ye've desaved me!" he fairly shrieked, pointing his bloody hand at the commander of the dragoons.

"I told you what I conscientiously thought to be true. I believed you to be dying and I told you so. You betrayed yourself," calmly replied the lieutenant.

"Ye lie! Ye've desaved me, I tell ye!" and with a howl of rage, the ruffian, a fiendish look overspreading his scowling brow, drew forth a dagger he had concealed in his bosom, and sprung at the officer.

In an instant, he was seized by a dozen hands, and disarmed before he could carry out his design. The villain, seeing his plans frustrated, cast a diabolical look at his intended victim, then settled into a dogged quietude.

"Answer the questions I put to you," said the lieutenant, approaching the Tory, "and you are a free man, though you should have merited a thousand deaths for your bloody acts."

The man only looked at his interlocutor, but made no answer.

"Tell me who were your companions, and what they have done with Miss Lear," continued the officer, "and on my honor as a soldier, the moment I feel assured that you have spoken the truth, you will be at liberty to depart unmolested."

"Ye've desaved me once, and ye shan't do it again."

"I repeat my question. Will you or will you not tell me the names of your companions, and whither they have taken the young lady?"

"I'll not!"

"Bring the prisoner without!" commanded the lieutenant, in a stern voice.

The order was promptly obeyed, and the Tory was conducted to the green in front of the dwelling.

The moon had already arisen, and its bright beams rendered the night almost equal to day. A towering oak stood a few yards from the door, and under its spreading branches the soldiers had collected in a group, forming quite a picturesque scene.

A strong rope was cast over one of the largest limbs, and a dragoon quietly formed a sliding noose at the end. A small cask was brought from the house and placed directly under the hanging cord.

The prisoner watched these ominous preparations with suspicion. The officer now approached him again.

"Will you answer the question that I have asked you?" he said.

"I've tol' ye once; ask me no more."

"Men, do your duty!"

In an instant the prisoner's hands were pinioned behind him, and the rope placed around his neck.

"Mount," said the officer.

The prisoner reluctantly placed himself on the cask. He now began to surmise the true meaning of what was going on, though at first he had half-suspected it was only a resort to the old ruse of extorting information.

"What are ye goin' to do wid me?" he asked, in a trembling tone.

"You shall see presently," was the answer.

"What does all this mean?" inquired the Tory, now thoroughly alarmed at the manner of the soldiers.

"That you are going to suffer a penalty that you have too often eluded, and which you merit but too well," answered the officer.

"Ye're not goin' to put me to death?"

"If you answer me what I have already asked you, no ; but if you refuse, yes !"

"If I answer yer questions am I free?"

"You are."

"If I refuse?"

"Then you die."

"Will you show me no mercy?"

"Think not of mercy, but of your God!"

"Look yere cap'n," said the Tory, who, though a miscreant, was no coward; "though ye wor to slice and quarter me, ye couldn't make Tom Turley blow on his comrades."

He had scarcely finished uttering these last words when the support was knocked from under him by a violent blow, and he was left dangling in the air.

He struggled violently for several moments, then uttered a piercing shriek :

"Help! help! cut the rope! Oh, God! mercy! mercy! mercy! Iron Hand!—old man!—Hank Pat—! I'll t—t—t—t—" His voice was hushed. The words, whatever they were, assumed only a gurgling sound in his throat, then died away in nothingness.

His limbs were slowly contracted, then as slowly straightened out again. His hands were tightly clenched. The finger-nails penetrated the flesh, making wounds from which nearly stagnant blood slowly oozed, pattering in drops on the leaves below.

He made a spasmodic effort to release his arms, but they fell quivering by his side. A slight, convulsive shudder shook his frame, and the soul of the Tory passed to its Maker.

Just at that moment a blast of wind, like a solemn dirge, swept through the forest, chanting, as it were, the dead man's requiem. The body was left swinging in the breeze, as a warning to all evil-doers, or until chance should direct the footsteps of some stragglers to the spot.

Thoughtful, and pondering on the ruffian's dying words, the dragoons returned to the house, there to deliberate what next should be done. After a short debate, they concluded to go back to the fort in the morning, as it was evident that the abducting party had either discovered their approach and fled or had departed before their arrival.

In either case they would reach the British lines before daylight, and as it was impossible to follow the trail by night, the dragoons were obliged to abandon the pursuit.

Making themselves as comfortable as possible, the troopers waited patiently until dawn, when they returned to the fort to make known the result of the expedition.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET MISSION.

THE cool night air awakened Imogene from the unconscious state into which she had fallen when first seized by her abductors.

Staring wildly around the apartment in which she was confined, she was unable to account for her strange position. Pressing her hot hands to her throbbing temples she tried to collect her scattered thoughts.

The recollection of the events of the past evening appeared to her like a terrible dream. Like a flash the thought occurred to her that she had been abducted. To think of such a thing almost crazed her brain.

"Where am I?" she wildly exclaimed, springing toward the ruffian who was keeping guard at her chamber door.

Without heeding her question, he made a commanding gesture for her to remain silent. She tried to draw him into conversation, but in vain.

Seeing she could not gain any information, she seated herself on the rude couch that had been prepared for her, and commenced to reflect.

The excitement and fatigue of the past few hours, however, were too much for her delicate frame, and in a few moments she fell into a gentle slumber.

The guard, seeing his charge asleep, closed the door of the chamber gently, and being wearied, seated himself near the fire. After fruitless endeavors to keep his heavy eyelids from closing, he was finally obliged to succumb to his drowsiness.

His head fell heavily on his breast, his arms hung listlessly before by his side, and in a few moments he was slumbering heavily. Imogene's sleep was light and fitful. Her dreams were haunted by the transactions of the past night.

In a short time she awoke. Hearing no movement outside, she listened attentively for the monotonous tread of her guard, but it had ceased. Nothing broke the awful stillness save the heavy breathing of the sleeping ruffians.

Rising quickly, she peered cautiously out, and there, by the dim light of the dying embers, she perceived her abductors wrapped in sound slumber.

Hastily procuring what articles were necessary to protect her against the chill air of the evening, she wrapped her shawl around her person, and quietly entered the dimly lighted room. Stepping lightly over the sleeping forms of her captors, she fled down the stairs.

The cool air fanned her fevered brow, and seemed to impart new strength to her exhausted frame. The inspiring hopes of escaping from her villainous captors had a salutary effect. Vaulting on the back of one of the horses that stood ready equipped, she dashed away from the house.

The clattering of the horse's hoofs aroused her guard. Looking around him in a bewildered manner, he hurried to where his prisoner was confined, only to find her gone.

"Awake! awake! to horse! to horse!" he frantically cried, applying his foot in no gentle manner to the sleeping forms of his companions.

"What's up?" asked they, in a single breath, springing to their feet.

"Our prisoner's escaped!"

"The prisoner escaped!" they both exclaimed in one voice.

"Yes; look for yourselves!" answered the other, pointing to the vacated chamber.

"To yer horses! We must hev the gal again, dead or alive!" cried the ruffian leader, hurrying to where the animals were picketed.

When they reached the spot, there were but two horses, the third was gone. Imogene had unconsciously selected the animal belonging to the wounded member of the party, and the owner had no other alternative than to follow in the pur-

suit on foot, or go back to the house and await the return of his comrades. He chose the latter.

He slowly retraced his steps, muttering imprecations loud and deep. The mounted ruffians hurried in pursuit of Imogene, hoping every moment to catch some sound that would direct them.

The chase was fruitless. They scoured the forest for miles around, but were finally obliged to abandon the search. Chagrined and disappointed by their ill-success, they were slowly returning to where they had left their companion that morning.

The day was drawing gradually to a close. The sun had already disappeared behind the western hills, when the two ruffians were suddenly confronted by a female—it was Imogene.

It appears that after leaving the house, she wandered, she knew not whither, until chance directed her attention to a small cavity near the roadside, where she lay concealed during the greater part of the day without being discovered by her pursuers.

The shades of night were fast approaching, wrapping the grand old forest in a somber gloom, when Imogene awakened to a sense of her lonely situation. As she pondered on her isolated condition, her mind was filled with fear and dreadful forebodings.

The thought, that she was there alone in that gloomy forest, a prey to wild beasts and starvation, almost distracted her. She almost wished that she had not effected her escape, and was about to give vent to her wild grief, when the tread of horses attracted her attention.

She paused and listened. Her ears had not deceived her. There was no mistaking the sound—some one was approaching. She quickly hid herself in the bushes, where she could get a view of the passers-by.

She had not long to wait; the footsteps steadily approached, and the next instant two horsemen loomed up in the distance. What was it that made Imogene start, and sent the hot blood coursing through her veins, as she caught sight of the foremost stranger?

"No—yes—it must be—it is *he*!" she murmured to herself. She could with difficulty refrain from uttering a cry of joy, as

she recognized in the form of one of these men, the pretended American scout and patriot—Hank Putney.

The sight of the scout reanimated her and restored her drooping spirits, and she quickly determined to discover herself to him and claim his protection until she should reach some place of safety.

At the sudden appearance of Imogene, after her recapture had been given up as hopeless, the scowl that darkened the brows of the two ruffians gave place to a look of savage joy.

It was evident to Putney, for it was indeed he, that Imogene had not yet recognized him as being one of her abductors, for what other reason could possibly have induced her to surrender herself into his hands unless it was that she still deemed him to be the character he had so basely assumed—a stanch American patriot, and the thought seemed to give infinite pleasure to the ruffian.

“So we’ve found ye at last,” he growled.

“Oh, Hank!” exclaimed Imogene, with delight, without noticing his rough salutation, as she approached the scout, her hands extended to welcome him, “I am so glad to have met you.”

“Yes?” answered Putney, with a sinister smile on his countenance.

“I have been in this dreary place the entire day, without either food or drink,” and Imogene shuddered as she commenced to relate the particulars of her abduction and escape, but the scout interrupting her, replied:

“I know all about it.”

“Have you captured some of the miscreants?”

“Not exactly.”

“Then you have been informed of their vile plot?”

“That neither.”

“In what manner, then, did you acquire this knowledge? You puzzle me, Hank—I can not understand you,” said Imogene, growing a little nettled at his cold, formal manner.

“That’ll all be explained to ye soon enough. In the meanwhile ye’ll mount and follow us,” he responded, at the same time making a gesture to his comrade to lead forward Imogene’s steed, which she had fastened near her place of concealment.

Depressed by the mysterious manner of Putney, Imogene, with a heavy heart, mechanically obeyed his order. The two ruffians stationed themselves on either side of her. These precautions looked suspicious, and a chill of fear crept over Imogene, as she witnessed them.

However, she quietly accompanied her companions, following wherever they led. During their journey she endeavored to draw her taciturn escort into a conversation, but without success. After a weary ride of several miles, stopping suddenly, she exclaimed:

"I will proceed no further, until you tell me whither you are leading me!"

"Ye won't, eh! I'll see about that."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"That, willin' or unwillin', ye must foller me."

"Where?"

"To th' place ye left this mornin'."

"Not back to the haunt of my villainous abductors?"

"'Xactly."

"Oh, no, Hank! You do not—you can not mean this! Tell me that you are but jesting!" wildly exclaimed Imogene, now thoroughly alarmed at the villain's words.

"It's th' truth."

"Then you are concerned in this plot?"

"If ye'll hev it so, I am."

"What! You do not mean to tell me, Hank, that *you*, *you* are a traitor—that *you* are one of these ruffians!"

The Tory hesitated a moment before answering, but feeling assured that he had nothing to fear in revealing his true character to his captive, as it was beyond her power to do him harm, he turned abruptly and replied:

"Yes. Hereafter ye'll know me, not as Hank, th' American scout and patriot, but as Putney, th' spy of th' Tory League!"

This announcement, like the sting of some venomous serpent, sunk deep into the heart of Imogene. For a moment she seemed completely paralyzed.

"Great Heavens! then I am lost!" she murmured, seeing how basely she had been betrayed, and how unwarily she had surrendered herself into the clutches of the villains.

The fact that Hank Putney and the leader of her abduct-

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was only equaled by his perfidy.

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to await their return.

As they emerged from the forest to cross the lawn leading to the dwelling, a slight breeze shook the tall pines—a peculiar sound reached their ears—the lengthened shadow of a human body stretched across the moonlit sward, reaching nigh to their very feet in its vacillating course.

They stopped—looked up—when, oh, horror! they beheld a spectacle sufficient to harrow up their very souls.

There, pendent between heaven and earth, with its form clearly outlined against the bright sky, was a black, frightful, hideous corpse, once their own cheerful comrade, now no more.

As it slowly swayed to and fro, moved by the gentle wind, with the pale moonbeams reflecting on the grim, distorted countenance, with features ghastly and repulsive, with eyes staring and glassy, that seemed to protrude from their sockets in their endeavors to pierce, as it were, the impenetrable darkness that enveloped the path of the soul, the ill-boding, shrill screams of the birds of prey, as they struggled and fought over their ghostly banquet of flesh, was a sight too dreadful to look upon.

The ruffians turned their heads in disgust from the horrible sight, and dragging more than leading Imogene, who seemed chained to the spot by some terrible fascination, they hurried away.

The ominous cries of the carnivorous birds still rung in their ears—sounds that penetrated the deepest chambers of their own dark hearts, pricking their consciences with the knowledge of the loath-some deeds there secreted.

On, on they hurried, through brier, bramble, and thicket, stopping not even to cast a single glance behind them, lest

they should again see the spectral figure of their late companion, until they had satisfied themselves that they had nothing to fear from ghost or human, when they reined in their panting steeds to recover breath.

"Oh, God! that was awful!" exclaimed Putney, in a husky voice. "Poor Tom was a plucky one; but that was an awful death to die!" and he covered his face with his brawny hands, trying to shut out the terrible scene from his imagination.

The corpse was that of their companion, to whom, that morning, the dragoons had administered such summary justice.

After a moment of respite, Putney gave the signal to again press onward. Over fallen trees, through swamp and morass, up the steep hill and across the valley, they hurried with a precipitation which naught but their superstitious fears could have created.

Their progress was at length arrested by the small stream that flowed into Lake George, between Forts William Henry and George. One of the party reconnoitered the bank for some distance to find a fordable place.

Finally the desired spot was discovered, and they succeeded in passing over in safety, receiving only a slight wetting. They were so near the forts, that the distant roll of the drums and winding of the bugles could be heard distinctly.

Putney urged the party to their utmost celerity. He was in great trepidation lest he should come across some scouting party returning to the fort. However, the crisis passed safely over, and they breathed freely as they escaped beyond the American lines.

After a short but wearisome ride, Putney signaled the party to halt and dismount. The spot at which they stopped was at the base of a large hill, possessed, in no respect, of any peculiarities to distinguish it from the landscape of the surrounding country.

Putney pushed his way through a large clump of bushes that grew some distance back from the roadside, and made a sign for the others to follow him.

They proceeded cautiously along a secret path that wound around the base of the mountain, and at length stopped before a large cavity partly concealed by shrubbery.

Putney knocked on a small door that barred what appeared to be the entrance to a cave. The bolts were slowly withdrawn, and the door cautiously opened by a dark, sullen-looking man, who held a large bunch of keys in his hand.

A nod of recognition was exchanged between this personage and Putney, and the party was allowed to enter. The place into which they were introduced, bore a dismal, somber appearance.

Benches were scattered promiscuously about, while on the side walls were hung all sorts of martial implements. Not a single person, however, was visible: all was as quiet as the grave.

They were conducted along a large corridor dimly lighted by a single lantern, whose feeble glare served only to lighten the gloominess of the situation.

Imogene was ushered into a brilliantly illuminated apartment, which, from all appearances, had, no doubt, been fitted up for her special reception.

She gazed about her with a half-bewildered air. The apartment was a magnificent one. There was a lavish display of grandeur, unsurpassed in many of our wealthiest drawing rooms.

From the ceiling hung a beautiful pendent, with variegated lights. The tapestried walls were grandiosely decorated in the richest and most artistic manner.

In the center of the room stood a table with vases, containing the choicest and rarest flowers, whose fragrant exhalations perfumed the whole apartment, serving to dispel the disagreeable odors emanating from the naturally damp walls.

The whole appearance of the place was strikingly at variance with the rest of the interior of this mysterious cavern. Recovering from her fit of abstraction into which she had fallen, Imogene rushed to the door of her prison, for this we must term it, to try and gain an egress, but it was securely barred.

She then turned her attention to the walls, lest perchance there might be some secret avenue to escape, but her hopes in that direction were speedily blasted.

Again she returned to her prison door, and with frantic

energy shook it violently, but it was proof against her feeble strength.

In an agony of despair, she cried aloud for assistance; however, naught save the echoes of her own voice gave back an answer.

"Lost! lost! lost!" she cried! "May Heaven defend and guide me in this, my hour of peril!"

The exertions she had made were too much for her delicate and exhausted frame. Tottering to a small couch that stood at the further end of the room, she cast herself upon it, and burying her face in her hands, gave vent to her grief.

Gradually a sense of drowsiness stole over her, and succumbing to nature's wants, she soon was lost in slumber. How long she remained thus, she knew not, when she was awakened by the creaking of her prison door as some person entered.

Remaining silent, she listened. The footsteps approached the middle of the apartment, then stopped. She started in alarm from her reclining posture and confronted her silent visitor.

He was a tall and stately personage, with an authoritative and commanding mien. His face was carefully concealed in the folds of an ample cloak that fell gracefully from his shoulders.

"Why this intrusion, sir?"

"No intrusion, fair lady, only a friendly visit."

At the sound of the stranger's voice Imogene involuntarily drew back.

"That voice—surely I have heard it before—it is so like his!" she whispered to herself. "Who are you, sir?"

"Behold!" exclaimed the stranger, throwing off his disguise.

"Great Heavens! Maurice!" and Imogene, trembling in every joint, staggered against the wall for support.

"Yes, Imogene!" replied her visitor, making a bow, half courteous, half ironical—"it is I."

"For what reasons are you here?—you, whom all thought to be hundreds of leagues hence?"

"To express my love to you. Yes, Imogene—it is the great love I bear you that has placed me here, and made me what you see me."

"Are you a voluntary inmate of this horrid place?"

"I am."

"And these wretched men that brought me hither?"

"Are my subordinates."

"But they, according to their own confession, are members of that notorious band called the Tory League. Are you then, numbered among their associates?"

"I am—their leader."

"Do you mean to tell me that *you*—but I dare not mention that terrible name; the very thought of it makes my blood run cold with horror."

"It is but too true—I *do* bear that name which none have learned to repeat, save to visit with curses and execrations the head of its possessor—Iron Hand."

"Yes, yes; that dreadful synonym for bloody murder and rapine."

"Imogene, you judge me too harshly. Though hated by mankind; though my name be whispered in accents of fear and loathing, yet I am not so bad as the world would have me. One thing always has sustained me when on the very verge of despair, and like a celestial guide, has directed my footsteps, and bid me hope when all around me was engulfed in misery and darkness—it is the thought, that you might yet look upon me more kindly; that you might at some future day, even learn to love me."

"Talk not to me of love! Know you not that I am already betrothed—that my hand is already plighted to another?"

"Ay! I know it but too well. It is that that has compelled me to have recourse to these extreme measures; it is the burning love that is consuming me, that has goaded me on to undertake that which in my better moments I would scorn to do."

"Is it to avow your vile passion that you have torn me from my happy home, and brought sorrow to the heart of my venerable father? Is it for that purpose that you have seduced America's sons from their allegiance—that you have enlisted in your service the silvery locks of age, and made them subservient tools for the furtherance of your diabolical schemes? It is for this, then, that you have outraged propriety, modesty,

and the laws of God and man? Is it thus you expect to be successful? You speak of love; yes, it is like that the hawk bears the dove, merely to toy with its victim for a time, then to rend it in pieces with its talons. Thank God! I have penetrated your disguise, and understand your villainous designs—I am no longer deceived. Your heart is black and treacherous, your soul stained with crimes innumerable, and hence has fled the breast of one so corrupted!”

The Tory chieftain drew back at the passionate energy of Imogene's manner. His rage stood revealed in his pale and distorted face; but suppressing his anger—he thought it policy—he replied with affected composure:

“You know not, Imogene, how I have loved and love you. Even supposing that I have acted with any rashness in this, why will you insist on my suffering for it? Why should reproaches be added to rejection, as it to make the cup of bitterness more full? Come, Imogene, we must yet be friends. I do not press you for an immediate answer; but tell me you will think of me, and think more kindly, and I will be happy. I go now, but will return on the morrow to receive my answer.”

Bowing low, he turned to depart.

“Hold! hold, sir!” exclaimed Imogene. “I wish to be harassed no further by these unwelcome visits. Your very presence fills me with a loathsome feeling I can not express. You can not deceive me by your duplicity. I know your purposes are vile. Hear then my answer. It is irrevocable and absolute. I hate you! I despise you! My soul tells me that you are worse than you appear. You have bribed a villain with a heart as black as your own, to deliver me into your power. Think you that vengeance sleepeth? No! its loud cry will rise to Heaven until you perish beneath its withering influence!”

As she spoke these words, with an energy beyond what she had ever shown, the fire that smoldered on the hearth fell in, and caused a sudden light to fill the place.

It shone ruddy brown upon the beautiful but stern face and uplifted arm of Imogene, and gave to her the appearance of an angel denouncing on the head of the villain before her the sentence of eternal woe.

It glared likewise upon the pale countenance of the Tory,

and gave to his distorted features a look of ghastliness and fear that might have suited such an occasion well.

The awe-inspiring picture lasted but for a second, then vanished. The fire again sunk low, the light grew dim. It came like a dismal vision, and like a vision faded.

This was more than her visitor had expected. He felt how thoroughly he was despised, and for a moment was speechless; but quickly recovering himself, a Satanic look overspread his countenance, and his eyes glared with a furious fire as he fairly hissed these words between his teeth:

"You have given me *your* answer, now list ye to *mine*! When we were but mere children together, you rejected my boyish love—you looked down upon me with scorn and contempt as you do now—you spurned me from you as though I were a dog, without pity, without mercy! Think you that I am impervious to such wrongs, such insults? Think you that you can with impunity beard the lion in his den, without reaping the result of your audacity? Mark ye! I will give you three days to reconsider your rash decision; at the expiration of that time, I will return for a final answer. Should you refuse me, then you are *mine*—mine, body and soul. There is no one to whom you can appeal for assistance—none that can help you. I alone possess that power, and should you disdain to avail yourself of it, then you are irretrievably lost!" and with a demoniac laugh, the Tory rushed from the place.

Imogene gazed for a moment with a wild stare after the retreating form of her late visitor, then reeled, and sunk swooning to the floor.

The morning succeeding the arrest of Captain Sherwood dawned clear and beautiful. The bright sunbeams struggled through the narrow, grated window of Edgar's cell, and brilliantly illuminated the apartment.

When he gazed about him, and beheld the joyful sunlight streaming athwart the floor of his prison, his feelings were too painful for description—it seemed, as it were, that every thing mocked him.

"Would that I could dispel these gloomy thoughts that possess me," he murmured. "There is an indescribable some-

thing—a feeling of sadness I can not banish. Shake it off I can not—it clings to me despite my efforts, and I feel as though it were a precursor of some terrible affliction about to befall me.”

While these despondent thoughts occupied his mind, he remained leaning with his shoulder against the wall, and gazing with a troubled look upon the decaying fire, when Colonel Hall entered the cell.

“Ah, good-morning, colonel,” exclaimed Edgar; “I am so glad to see you; your presence makes me feel less sad.”

“Good-morning, captain; I hope you are well.”

“Yes, colonel, well in body, though not in spirit. But why do *you* look so sad? Are you in trouble?”

“Yes, captain, I am.”

“Then we are companions in misfortune.”

“Would to God that we were!”

“Why? Do you so commiserate the unhappiness of others, that you are willing to share it with them?”

“The affliction is not so much my own, captain, as my friend’s.”

“Your friend! Ah! then there is another to whom you may offer condolence. May I inquire his name?”

“Alas! you know it but too well; the person is—yourself!”

“Myself! Is there then some new tale of woe—some additional sorrow to be added to my already heavy burden? Tell it me, I beseech you, colonel—keep me not in suspense.”

“Calm yourself, Captain Sherwood, that you may listen to me.”

Drawing his seat close to that of Edgar, Colonel Hall, in as gentle a manner as possible, related to him Imogene’s sudden and mysterious disappearance, the success of the party that he had dispatched in search of her, and their return to the fort that morning.

At the conclusion of this sad intelligence, Edgar uttered a deep groan. His head sunk forward on his knees in an access of deep emotion, and his eyes were fixed with a vacant stare on the floor.

For several moments, silence, gloomy and profound, reigned.

Raising his head slowly, his face, which was now pale and haggard, presented a picture of despair.

"What have they done with her?" he faintly asked.

"At present I am unable to answer you. The prisoner that was captured, and from whom the information which I have imparted to you was elicited, remained reticent on that point. However, I will use the most strenuous exertions to have the mystery unraveled in a satisfactory manner. Too long has the border ran with the blood of the victims of these cut-throats. I will have them hunted down wheresoever they be, till they pay the penalty of their villainous deeds," exclaimed Colonel Hall, in an emphatic tone, a stern look settling on his brow.

"Heaven bless and reward you, colonel, for your kindness to me."

"Mention it not, Captain Sherwood, I beg of you. I have done no more to you, than I would have expected you to do me under like circumstances. I must tarry no longer, however, as the time flies swiftly by, and my men are under orders, impatiently awaiting my commands."

His hand was already on the latch of the cell-door, when Edgar again addressed him.

"A word more, Colonel Hall, before you go. I have another—a final request to make of you; should you accede to it, you will confer upon me an inestimable boon."

"Well, what may it be?"

"That you will allow my friend, War-Cloud, to visit me here alone."

"Captain, any thing within my power that will tend to alleviate the rigorousness of your unpleasant position I will willingly do—your request I grant."

"Thanks! thanks!"

But a short interval elapsed after the departure of Colonel Hall, when the door opened and War-Cloud entered. Edgar, seizing the hand of his friend with warmth, and wringing it cordially, led him to a seat beside his own, near the fire.

"I have a purpose, my friend, in thus sending for you," said Edgar. "You are aware of my helpless situation, unable to assist myself, or even her who is dearer to me than life itself; for this reason have I sought you, as the only one to

whom I could unhesitatingly reveal my grave suspicions. I also have a plan to unfold. Should it succeed, every thing may again be righted ; however, its undertaking entails many hazards, perhaps death."

" War-Cloud is always ready to aid his white brother."

" Thanks, my faithful friend ! To you, then, will I confide my suspicion—in you do I place my last, my forlorn hope. Draw near to me, that not a single word I speak may escape you ; for should this fail, then all is lost !"

Looking cautiously around to see that he could not be overheard, Edgar commenced in a low, whispering tone to disclose to the scout the plan of which he had spoken.

It was evident by the startled manner of War-Cloud, so foreign to his natural stoicism, that he was a listener to a disclosure that surpassed his most extravagant conceptions.

After a long conversation, they both arose. The sad, dejected features of Edgar were now lighted up by a more hopeful look, while on the countenance of War-Cloud there was an expression of settled determination to be successful in this enterprise, could human efforts effect such a result.

Moving toward the door, their eyes met, and in that gaze each read the depth of friendship's love. The two friends clasped hands affectionately, and with a mutual farewell, the next moment the Indian was gone.

The following morning anxious inquiries were made at the fort concerning the whereabouts of War-Cloud, but he was nowhere to be found.

He had quietly made his exit, unknown to any of the garrison ; but as these sudden and mysterious disappearances were of no uncommon occurrence, they created no suspicion.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE HUNTED LIFE.

WE will again return to the fort. It was the day subsequent to the arrest of Captain Sherwood and the disappearance of Imogene Lear.

These unlooked-for events had furnished sufficient matter for the gossips of the garrison; but now something else had turned up which bid fair to overwhelm them.

In fact, the whole community was wild with excitement about an apparition that a dozen or more affirmed to have seen the previous night, pacing to and fro upon the parapets.

The soldiers became superstitious, and were collected here and there in groups of three or four discussing the matter.

"I tell yer," exclaimed a burly-looking fellow of one of these crowds, "my eyes never cheated me yet, nor did they last night. It wor he; I am sure of it!"

"But, Tompkins," said another, "how could it have been the cap'n? for I kept close guard at his cell-door all night, and I am certain he *was* there, too."

"Can't help it, if ye did," chimed in Patney, the scout. "Bill and I saw Sherwood on th' parapets, as sartin as we live. He wor all-fired pale, and wore a long, white, shaggy cloak that looked awful enough to make one's teeth chatter and the hair to stand up straight."

"I reckon that's so, Pat," said Bill; "my legs shake just a leetle now."

"I wouldn't take that post on the parapets for half the world," said a third man.

"'Cause you're a scurish one," growled the man opposite him. "You'd ought to be a woman! I'd take it for nothing, and if the ghost came near me he'd catch some cold lead for his trouble."

At this remark the crowd enjoyed a short laugh at the "scared fellow's" expense.

"This cap'n is a tricky one, comrades," said Patney, "and

ye'd all better look out for him in the futer, or he'll fix some of ye."

"He's the devil's own!" added Bill.

Such was the talk concerning the ghost, or whatever it might be, which they had seen. All who had witnessed the phenomenon declared that it was Captain Sherwood; but when the mystery was examined into, it was proved beyond doubt that the captain had never left his cell once during the night.

This was strange indeed, and no one could solve the enigma. The captain began to be regarded with superstitious awe. He heeded it not; there were more serious troubles that weighed upon his mind.

It was the day on which his trial was to take place; and as the hour for assembling the court approached, he began to grow a little uneasy.

He had hitherto forgotten his own danger in his great sorrow for the lost Imogene; but now, he awoke to a clear sense of his own condition, and took a glance at the means that were to extricate him from it.

The situation was indeed becoming alarming, for he was well aware that should it in any way be proved that he was the dreaded Iron Hand, his life would be worthless.

"What could he do?" he asked himself. "There is some terrible mistake, and I fear me it will not be rectified until too late!"

The moment at length arrived, and a court was detailed to examine into his case. Upon its decision the fate of Edgar Sherwood rested.

The assembly was quite large, consisting of the troops and nearly all the civilians living in the vicinity. There were three judges, clad in the martial vestments of their profession, and maintaining a gravity worthy of the occasion, and becoming their rank.

In the center was a venerable-looking man, whose whole exterior bore the stamp of long-trying military habits. It was Colonel Hall, who was the presiding justice of the court. His associates were officers selected from the troops that garrisoned the forts situated near Lake George.

Their demeanor was mild, but bore a grave reserve. Re-

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fore these arbiters, Edgar Sherwood was ushered, under the custody of two armed men.

A profound and awful silence succeeded his entrance, while every eye was turned upon him. Then Colonel Hall arising, spoke in the deep tones of one used to wield authority :

"Let the prisoner advance."

Edgar proceeded with a firm step into the center of the apartment. All was now anxiety and eager curiosity.

"Captain Sherwood, you are aware of the reason for this tribunal, are you not?"

"I am."

"Perhaps it would be prudent," said one of the judges, "to inform the prisoner, that he is not bound to answer any questions that will aid in his own condemnation."

Edgar nodded, and Colonel Hall proceeded.

"You are charged, sir, with being an officer in his majesty's service, and of remaining in the Continental army in disguise, for the purpose of acting as spy. What have you to say to this?"

"That it is false!" exclaimed Edgar, in a tone that echoed throughout the room.

"On what ground?"

"On the ground of my conduct heretofore."

"This, undoubtedly, will have some weight, sir, but not sufficient to counterbalance the testimony of witnesses. Have you any other?"

Edgar paused, and seemed to commune with himself for a moment, then answered with a look of dejection :

"No, none. I am deserted, and there is no one to speak in my behalf. Let the case take its course—I must abide your decision!"

"But, take time to reflect, sir; you must have something more to offer in defense!" said the judge, quickly.

"Nothing."

At this, there was a frightful calmness in the manner of the judge that seemed to appall the assemblage, and a murmur of pity arose from some.

The silence lasted but for a moment, and then the witnesses for the prosecution were ordered by the justice to come forward.

Hank Putney, the scout, was the first called.

"Do you know the prisoner?" asked the judge.

"I do," returned the man, casting a careless glance at Edgar.

"How long have you known him?"

"Wal, let me see," and he began to count his fingers; "about—about—I reckon since Jenuary last."

"During this time, have you ever noticed any thing suspicious in his conduct that would lead you to believe him a British spy?"

"Yes, yer honor, somethin' tarnation strong, I should say."

"State it."

"Wal, it wor th' day afore yesterday that it happened. Bill Hawkins and I wor sent out to sarch for him, as ye thought him either taken prisoner or shot, one or t'other; but 'twas no such thing. About night, we come across a band o' these Tory and red-skin devils, and there, right in th' middle of 'em, wor our cap'n lookin' as big as all yer honors put together. He wor ev'dently their boss, for th' devils wor all obeyin' his orders, and trottin' their legs off to serve him."

"Now, my man, you are aware that you are under oath?"

"Oh sartin, yer honor!"

"Are you positive that the prisoner before you and the man you saw as a leader in the Tory camp, are one and the same person?"

"Sartin, as my name is Hank Putney!"

"That will do."

During the scout's examination, the most intense interest prevailed among the listeners, for it was understood that the whole case rested mainly upon his testimony.

The accusation was so plain, the facts so limited, the proof so obvious and the penalty so well established, that escape at once seemed impossible.

The next witness was Putney's companion, Bill Hawkins. His testimony fully corroborated the scout's in every respect. He swore that he had seen Captain Sherwood in the midst of the Tories, in command of the band known as the Tory League.

"How do you know that he was in command, and that he is their chief, Iron Hand?" asked the justice.

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"Heard the red-skins call him that name," replied Bill.

"Was he, at this time, dressed in the uniform of the Continental army?"

"No, not exactly. He had on huntin' clothes like the Indians. He also wore a white, shaggy jacket, jist like the ghost had last night."

"Never mind, Hawkins, what the ghost had, but the prisoner," said the justice, smiling. "You think he was clothed in some garment made of white, shaggy fur?"

"Yes, yer honor, jist that."

"Are there any more to testify in this case?" asked the judge, glancing around the room.

There was a brief silence, and then Putney, with the assistance of a soldier, conducted a man to where the judges were seated.

The stranger stopped and looked around him at the crowd in wild dismay, until at length his eyes rested upon the prisoner, when he gave a sudden start, but immediately recovered himself.

However, all perceived this strange conduct on the part of the new witness.

"Who is this you have here?" asked the judge.

"A prisoner we captur'd last night," said Putney. "I calculate he's one of th' cap'n's gang; he seems to know him."

"My man, who are you?" said the judge, "and what do you know about the prisoner?"

The stranger hung his head, but did not reply.

"Speak out, I conjure you!" cried the judge. "If you can give any information in this matter, that will serve to clear up the mystery, you shall be set at liberty."

These words seemed to take effect upon him, and he appeared to be more at ease.

"Do you know the prisoner?" again asked the judge, eagerly.

"Shall I have my liberty if I tell?"

"Yes, I pledge you my word you shall."

The man again held down his head, and after some moments, ventured a sly glance at Edgar, who all the time seemed to be regarding him with astonishment. Turning alternately red and pale, apparently doing battle with himself, he replied:

"He's the Tory chief, Iron Hand."

"My God!" cried Edgar, starting to his feet with a savage look. "What new enemy is this that dare utter lies so foul! Merciful Heaven! is there no hope for me? Am I to be condemned on the testimony of such villains?"

The stranger, with a look of fear depicted on every lineament of his face, sprung behind the soldier.

"Keep him off! keep him off!" he screamed, "he'll kill me!"

For a short time the court-room was a scene of intense excitement, and the judges arose to quell it.

"Remand your prisoner," said the justice, to the officer who was in charge of Edgar.

After a short consultation, the tribunal gave their verdict against Edgar; and Colonel Hall, though his heart bled with pity for the sad fate of his young friend, saw before him nothing save his stern, uncompromising duty, and with trembling hand, signed the death-warrant.

It briefly stated, that Edgar Sherwood had been detected within the American lines, as a British spy in disguise, and that thereby, according to the laws of war, he was liable to suffer death, and that the court adjudged him to the penalty—sentencing him to be executed by hanging, on the morning of the following day.

The sentence of the court was communicated to the prisoner, who received it with perfect resignation. The assembly dispersed, and the judges retired to their own quarters with unmoved exterior, and the consciousness of dispassionate integrity.

It was on the night after the trial, that a solitary traveler might have been seen pursuing his way through a thick wood situated about ten miles from the fort.

He was possessed of a powerful frame, being full six feet in height, and was clad in a hunter's garb, consisting of shirt and breeches made of skins.

In his girdle was placed an ugly-looking knife. His head was adorned with a fur cap that hung down over the upper part of his face, which gave him a somewhat singular appearance. His hair was coarse, matted, and fiery red.

As he proceeded on his way, his conduct to any observer would have appeared decidedly suspicious. Every now and then he would stop and listen attentively, and after casting a searching glance about him to satisfy himself that no one was following him, he would move on again.

The night was quite dark; an easterly wind, accompanied by a chilling dampness, gave unerring notice of an approaching storm. But the traveler, heeding it not, pushed on with long strides, until at length he reached a mysterious-looking hut standing at the foot of a hill and hemmed in with large rocks and stunted oaks, whose foliage nearly concealed it from view.

Here he stopped and gave a peculiar whistle. The door was cautiously opened, and an armed man appeared at the entrance.

"Hank!" said he, in a whisper.

"Here, chief—open th' door," answered our friend, Hank Putney, the scout.

The door was now thrown wide open to permit the traveler to enter, and then closed and securely barred. The two men uttered no words of greeting, but approaching one side of the room, they sat down before a half-extinguished fire.

"You must be nearly chilled through, Hank," said the man. "Here, take some of this," and he handed the scout a flask.

Putney seized it with avidity, and placing it to his mouth, took a deep draught.

"That's right good old stuff," said he, smacking his lips, as he returned the bottle.

"Yes; this is the cordial our Whig neighbor had stored away in his cellar," said the Tory, chuckling.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Putney; "he wor a clever old chap to keep it for yer, chief."

"Very accommodating indeed, I should say, for it was just what my lander was sadly deficient in at the time," and he indulged in another suppressed laugh. "But come, tell me what news you bring, Hank, for I am getting impatient."

"Wal, it's all right!" exclaimed the scout, bringing his fist down on the palm of his hand. "He's to be hanged to-morrow!"

"What! have they convicted him then, of being Iron Hand, and a British spy?"

"Yes."

"Capital! Give me your hand, worthy friend; you have done me inestimable service," and the Tory chieftain seized the hand of his companion, with apparent cordiality.

"Yer writin', chief, and my swearin', are goin' to stretch his windpipe to-morrow mornin'," continued Putney, with a swaggering air.

"Ha! ha! ha! Well, that is a good joke, and well played, Hank."

The man's small gray eyes sparkled with delight, and he could hardly restrain himself, so great was his joy at this piece of news.

"What fortune!" cried he; "just what I wanted. Here, let us drink our fill—drink to the man who dies to-morrow."

"Here it goes then!" and Hank raised the bottle to his lips. "That his journey in th' world hereafter may be a jolly one!"

"Ay, my worthy fellow."

As the fire, at intervals, brightened up and filled the room with a red light, it cast the forms of the men in fantastic shadows upon the wall.

Theirs were strange pictures—faces that portrayed the evil side of human nature, and any one observing them while hate and joy beamed thereon, would have involuntarily retreated with a feeling of horror and disgust.

"How about the ghost, Hank, did you see it?" asked the chief, with a roguish twinkle in his eye.

"Ye devils, didn't I though! Ha! ha! ha! ye played yer part well, chief," and Putney's sides shook with laughter.

"The fools," said Iron Hand. "You can frighten them all to madness."

"They reckon the cap'n's a wizard, and 'll bring ruin t' 'em all."

Iron Hand apparently did not hear this last remark, but sat musing for some moments before he spoke.

"Did they condemn him on your testimony alone, Hank?"

"Mine and Bill Hawkins', th' chap I had with me t' other day when I got th' writin'."

"He believed he swore to the truth?"

"Oh, o' course!"

There was another pause.

"I thought I'd make it a bit stronger, howsomever, so I brought down one of th' League from th' lower camp," continued Putney. "We made him believe that he wor my prisoner. It wor Sandy Jim, and he's a trump. He swore that th' prisoner was Iron Hand, and they let him go for doin' it."

"You have done this job so far, Hank, in superb style; you are my best man in the whole band. Now if you will go back and aid in bringing our plan to a successful issue, you shall be a rich man the day you return and prove to me that this mortal enemy of mine is *dead*!"

"Agreed!" cried Putney. "I'd better start now, or th' mornin' will overtake me afore I get back to th' fort," and with a parting farewell the two men separated.

CHAPTER IX.

A SAVAGE FRIEND.

AFTER his interview with Hank Putney, Iron Hand set out hastily to return to the rendezvous of his band. As he hurried along, a smile of exultation overspread his countenance, and he seemed to experience a secret feeling of joy at the success of his deep-laid schemes.

He would occasionally indulge in a low, smothered laugh, as some point of his plot more subtle than the rest would recur to his mind. As he drew near to the cave, he found his lieutenant at the entrance awaiting his approach.

"Well, lieutenant," he exclaimed, addressing that officer, "what news?"

"There is a new applicant, an Indian, sir, who is desirous of joining the band."

"A new recruit, eh, and an Indian too! This is strange intelligence. What do you know of him?"

"Nothing further, than he says that he has been forced to fly from beyond the lines of our enemy, the rebels. Indeed, he seemed ardently desirous of being enrolled as a member, and appears to bear a deep hatred toward his persecutors."

"Is this all the knowledge you have of this fellow?"

"It is, sir."

"You will send him to me then, immediately. But look ye, lieutenant, should he be admitted to the League, you will **keep a vigilant watch on his movements.**"

In a few moments afterward, Iron Hand was confronted in his apartments by this new aspirant for predatory honors.

"What reasons bring you within the precincts of this camp?" asked the Tory chieftain, as he bent upon his visitor a cool, calculating gaze, as though he would read his innermost thoughts.

The Indian gave an explanation of his actions in a brief and apparently satisfactory manner, for at its conclusion Iron Hand exclaimed:

"Ah, I understand! you seek to become one of us in order that you may find an occasion to revenge yourself?"

The Indian bowed in response.

"Then you have not sought in vain," he continued; "for we are about to attack a party of these rebels this very night, and there you will have an ample opportunity to glut your vengeance. You may report yourself to my lieutenant, who will appoint you your station."

As the Indian was about to depart, the Tory chief arose quickly and approached him. Laying his hand on his shoulder, he whispered:

"The reward is, for those who perform their duty faithfully and do not neglect the interest of the band—pillage, plunder, and wealth; but for a traitor—death!"

With this warning injunction, the newly-enrolled member withdrew to prepare himself to take part in the coming *melée*.

The different members of the band were in a state of bustle and confusion, making preparations for the expected encounter. This new enterprise was originated, not with the usual design of pillaging, but for the purpose of attacking a

small party of the enemy that were encamped midway between the rendezvous of the League and the American lines, and whom, on account of their proximity, it was deemed expedient to remove, as the retreat of the band was liable at any moment to be discovered by them.

At midnight they set out, and stealthily made their way through the forest to the appointed place of attack. Their foe, lulled into a feeling of security against attack, and little dreaming of the presence of their deadly opponents, were slumbering calmly.

At a preconcerted signal, out flashed the fire of a hundred rifles, whose sharp crack went reverberating through the forest.

The attacked party, though completely taken by surprise, fought bravely, and it was not until overwhelmed by superior numbers that they slowly retreated, obstinately disputing every foot of the ground.

Iron Hand watched every action of the strange Indian.

"See, with what a desperate vim this fellow strikes!" he exclaimed, as he observed the Indian, heedless of danger, throw himself recklessly upon the foe. "These other rascals fight for plunder only, but he seems to battle for the hatred he bears those rebels. This is my man—I will trust him," he murmured to himself; "he will be of valuable service to me personally, do I but play well my part."

At the command of the chief the pursuit was discontinued, and the Tories, jubilant over their success, returned to the cave. The quiet, calm demeanor of the strange Indian was quite a striking contrast to the boisterous hilarity of his companions.

For a long time, the chief topic of conversation among the members of the Tory League, was the fearless intrepidity of their new comrade, who bore with unblushing indifference the plaudits thus bestowed upon him.

Imogene was awakened from the swoon into which she had fallen after the termination of her interview with Iron Hand, by the touch of some cold object.

As she raised herself slowly, she just succeeded in catching a view of the figure of a man—an Indian, she knew by his peculiar dress and the feathers that adorned his head—as he glided swiftly from the apartment.

"Who could this mysterious visitor be?" she asked herself.

While arising from her reclining position she felt something in her hand—it was a small piece of paper carelessly folded.

Opening it hastily, she with difficulty managed to decipher from the rude, scrawling characters, the following significant warning:

"Be watchful—a friend is near."

Startled beyond measure by the contents of this anonymous note, she was obliged to read it over repeatedly before she could fairly realize its import.

In vain did she strive to give herself a satisfactory answer as to who this unknown friend could be. Of such a person sufficiently near to be of service to her, she knew not.

This inspiring news, vague though it was, revived her drooping spirits. Pressing the billet fervently to her lips, she placed it safely in her bosom, as though it were a gem of the richest order.

The nearly extinct sparks of hope that lay dormant within her breast, were again enkindled into a flame. Oh, how slowly the hours, which to her seemed like years, glided by, as in a state of feverish excitement, she anxiously awaited the arrival of that promised assistance which came not.

Night was fast approaching; the evening of that day on which the Tory chieftain had threatened to visit her, to receive her final answer. Imogene sat musing, trying to picture to herself the result of the terrible drama in which she was acting so conspicuous, but yet so unwilling a part.

"Perhaps her new-found friend had been detected in his gallant attempts to aid her, and was now suffering the penalty of his generosity?" she thought.

While thus battling with her despondent feelings, she was startled by hearing a gentle, catlike footstep on the floor. Starting back half-affrighted, she beheld approaching her the bearer of the mysterious note.

There was no mistaking his identity, for there was the same peculiar dress, the same drooping war-locks. The stranger advanced unhesitatingly, and as he entered into the circle of light projected by the lamp, he threw off his disguise, displaying to view the features of our old and trusty friend, the faithful scout and patriot—War-Cloud.

For a moment Imogene was speechless.

"What! War-Cloud, you here, too!" she exclaimed, at length, with a look of amazement.

She was about to speak further, but the scout raised his finger with a significant gesture, warning her to remain quiet. In answer to her anxious, inquiring look, he related in a few hurried sentences the ruse he had practiced to enable him to join the band, and how he accidentally learned of her presence in the cave, through two Tories whose services he had enlisted in a conspiracy he had formed for the abduction of Iron Hand.

Imogene listened with wrapt attention. At the conclusion, War-Cloud ordered her to be prepared to take her departure at midnight, and then withdrew from the place as noiselessly as he had entered.

Finding herself once more alone, Imogene, assuming an attitude of prayer, poured out her soul in fervent thanksgiving to Him who is the dispenser of all blessings.

The scout hastened back to his accomplices, of whom he had spoken. It appears that immediately after joining the League, he had noticed, with his natural keen perception, a lurking spirit of dissatisfaction among several members of the band, especially among two in particular.

By fomenting this turbulent spirit, and by promises of sharing the bounteous reward offered for the capture of the Tory chieftain, he had succeeded in bringing them over to his views, at the same time without permitting them to obtain even an inkling of his own real character.

With their plans thus well matured, the conspirators prepared to put them into execution. Scarcely had the gun from one of the neighboring frontier forts boomed the hour of midnight, when they quietly arose, and stepping carefully over the bodies of their sleeping companions, hurried to the apartment of Imogene, who, fearful that every moment would herald the advent of her detested suitor, Iron Hand, was impatiently awaiting them.

The crisis of thier undertaking had now arrived. To succeed in leaving the place without causing any alarm, was the only difficulty. As soon as they arrived at the mouth of the cave, the sentinel stationed there hailed them, but with

the rapidity of lightning, War-Cloud sprung upon him, and bearing him to the earth, firmly secured him.

The next moment Imogene, under the guidance of one of the Tories, waving a hasty adieu, was gone. The scout and his companion returned to their places among their slumbering comrades, there to abide their time for the carrying out of the rest of their plan.

As soon as he felt assured that Imogene had reached a safe distance, the scout arose, and seizing his rifle, hastened to the entrance of the rendezvous and discharged it. In an instant every member of the band was on his feet, inquiring the cause of the alarm.

Motioning his companion to keep close to him, War-Cloud, uttering a loud cry, dashed into the apartment of the chief. On hearing of his prisoner's escape, Iron Hand, with an oath, rushed into Imogene's late place of confinement, only to find that the bird had flown.

At this discovery, his frenzy knew no bounds. Uttering a yell of rage, he bade War-Cloud and his companion to mount and follow him. For a time the Tory chieftain's usual cunning seemed to have deserted him, for without seeming to harbor the slightest suspicion of treachery, he ordered War-Cloud to lead the way.

By the aid of the full autumnal moon, which ever and anon shot, like a flying ghost, from one dark mass of vapor to another, the trail of the fugitives was followed without difficulty.

It was necessary to overtake them before they should reach the American lines, or else all was lost. On, on, they rode, until they were almost within gunshot of the enemy, when through an intervening space in the trees, Iron Hand spied the fleeing forms of Imogene and her guide.

With a cry of exultation, the Tory, plunging his rowels deep into the reeking sides of his steed, hurried in pursuit of them, closely followed by his two companions. Imogene heard the cry and looked back. She saw the Tory, and understood the demoniac expression of his countenance. She cast her eyes on the face of her companion, but upon it was stamped a look of calm indifference.

Oh, for a few short moments, and she would again be free!

How agonizing the thought that she was thus to be retaken ! and, too, within sight of the very camp-fires of her friends. Once more did she sum up courage to steal another glance at her pursuers. They were gaining upon her slowly but surely.

In vain did she endeavor to accelerate the speed of her panting animal. Another instant and she would again be within the power of her detested captor ! She could almost feel his hot breath.

"Ha ! ha ! fair rebel," he exclaimed with a malignant laugh, "captured at last !"

As he was on the point of laying hold of the bridle of Imogene's steed, he felt himself seized on either side by an iron grasp, while a brace of pistols were presented at his head.

"Villains ! What means this ?" he cried, struggling to free himself.

"That the tables are turned, chief, and you're our prisoner," replied War-Cloud, raising his weapon in a threatening manner.

"Ah, treason ! You—" but before he could complete his sentence, he was dragged from his horse, disarmed, and firmly bound.

The Tory made a desperate attempt to regain his liberty, but, seeing how futile were his efforts, he sullenly resigned himself to his fate.

In a short time the party reached the American outposts, by whom they were conducted to the nearest frontier garrison, to the commander of which, War-Cloud related his adventures, and at the same time requested an escort to conduct his prisoner to Fort Ann the next morning, which was readily granted.

After paying his companions that had assisted him in Iron Hand's capture, their portion of the reward, and exacting from them a promise that they would engage no longer in their former occupation, he dismissed them.

CHAPTER X.

THE MASK REMOVED.

WHILE all in the garrison were bathed in quiet sleep, the slumbers of Captain Sherwood were broken. After spending a night of restlessness, he arose unrefreshed from the rude bed where he had thrown himself, and walked to his prison window.

That brilliant luminary, the sun, like a ball of golden fire, was just beginning to light up the eastern sky, giving promise of another bright autumnal day. As Edgar looked out upon the beautiful landscape painted by his Creator, a feeling of awe which he had never before experienced, crept over him.

Every thing seemed to assume a more beautiful aspect, now that he was soon to be parted from them forever ; they began to find a more precious place in his affections. It almost drove him to despair to think that he was to die so soon. Ay ! before his course was run ; to die a disgraceful—a traitor's death !

" Oh ! my God ! " he exclaimed, dropping his head upon his breast, " have mercy on me ! If I must die, let me leave a spotless name behind me ! " unable any longer to control his feelings, he gave way to his grief.

" My life is fated ! " exclaimed he, at length. " A dark shadow is cast before me ; but I will show them that I can die like a man ! " and with these words Captain Sherwood prepared himself to meet his doom like a hero.

He paced up and down his cell in deep abstraction. He was thinking over his whole life, and it was one that had experienced some vicissitudes. As his thoughts flew on, they gradually came back to the present.

" What could have become of his beautiful Imogene ? " he asked himself for the hundredth time ; " and again, his faithful friend, War-Cloud—where was he all this time ? "

After putting one suspicious circumstance with another, he fully believed that some one was plotting against

was not those men who had sworn his life away, but some profound villain of whom they were but tools.

"Can it be possible," he mused, "that Imogene may be even at this moment in the power of this villain, whosoever he may be!"

The remembrance of his frightful dream flashed across his mind.

"Great Heavens!" he cried, "it was a presentiment—a true one! Oh! oh! oh! she is dead—I shall go mad!" and he staggered against the wall of his cell for support.

Just then the first beams of the morning sun stole in through the window. This little circumstance, slight as it may seem, reanimated the captain.

"It is an emblem of hope," said he, recovering himself.

There is no more delusive phantom than hope; and it seems to be the happy privilege of all to cull whatever pleasures can be gathered from its indulgence. What we think ought to be, we are fond to think will be.

Thus it was with our hero—he hoped that something might happen before the appointed hour for his execution to extricate him from his terrible dilemma.

Time, however, passed away. As the hours flew swiftly by, every blow of the clock's brass hammer sounded like a death-knell upon the heart of the prisoner. Shortly there was heard a great noise without—the creaking of timbers, and the sound of the hammer and saw.

Edgar grew pale and approached the window. There it was—that horrid machine of human vengeance—the gibbet, glaring before his eyes, like an evil conscience harassing the soul of a dying man.

The cold sweat burst from his burning brow. He had felt before that it was hard for one so young as he to die a death of infamy; but to spend his last moments alone and unpitied; to know that all near him thought his fate merited; that in a few hours he was to be conducted from the gloom of his cell to the gallows, there to meet the gaze of a curious multitude, as if he were a beast led to slaughter; and then to take his departure of life, amidst the jeers and scoffs of his fellow-creatures—this, indeed, was death—terrible death.

A short time previous to the execution, Edgar was aroused

by hearing a slight tap on his cell door, and the next instant a man was ushered into the apartment.

The stranger was a minister. His face was one of awful gravity.

In stature he was above the size of ordinary men, though his excessive leanness might contribute in deceiving as to his height; his countenance was sharp and unbending, and every muscle seemed set in the most rigid compression; his eyes were concealed beneath a pair of enormous green spectacles, which gave these organs a very singular look.

His coat was black, and his breeches and stockings were of the same hue, his shoes were without luster, and half concealed beneath their huge, plated buckles.

"I have come," said the divine, nodding to Edgar, "to pray with you."

Edgar bowed his head, and the two knelt down. The good man's sonorous voice filled the cell with solemn words. Edgar's heart beat with wild emotions, and he now felt that every throb was but another herald warning him of death's near approach.

Upon rising from prayer, he ventured near the window once more and cast another glance at the gallows. A large crowd was collected about it, eagerly waiting to witness the death of Iron Hand, the British spy.

"These are heartless people!" said the minister, looking over Edgar's shoulder. "But be firm, my poor brother; there is mercy for all before the great Throne of Justice."

The multitude did not have long to wait. A few moments prior to the expiration of the appointed hour, the prisoner, guarded by several soldiers, came forth.

He was slightly pale, but stood erect, and marched forward with a firm, military step. Approaching the scaffold, they went slowly up the stairs to the platform.

The vast concourse of people were now as one, silent and motionless. Nothing broke the stillness save the hanging rope, which trembled and squeaked as a slight wind swayed it back and forth.

The soldiers of the garrison were drawn up in a square around the gallows, while outside of the guard was the populace. Every elevated place was thronged with spectators.

Elgar advanced to the front of the platform to say a few parting words, but the reports of several rifles in quick succession prevented him. All turned simultaneously to look from whence they came.

A horseman was seen in the distance approaching with flying speed. On, on, he comes—now for a moment lost to view as he plunges through some grove of trees, then quickly emerges again, leaping forth on the open ground, growing larger and larger, until at length he is near enough to be recognized by all, when the cry of “War-Cloud! War-Cloud!” rung upon the air.

The steed, foaming and gray with dust, with nostrils dilated and eyes flashing fire, dashed by the guard and halted before the scaffold. The scout leaped from the faithful charger, and springing up the steps seized the executioner’s arm.

“Hold, my pale-face brother!” he cried.

At these words the spectators were struck with amazement, and gazed about them for an explanation. At the expiration of a few moments, four more horsemen arrived. They were dragoons, and with them rode a man lashed to his horse, and behind him, on a white steed, came a female.

The party halted, and awaited War-Cloud’s orders. As Elgar caught sight of the unknown lady, he gave a sudden start, and the color faded from his cheek.

“Can it be she?” he murmured to himself.

He had surmised correctly; it was in truth Imogene Lear. As she approached him their eyes met. The recognition was mutual. The next instant, shedding tears of joy, they were clasped in each other’s arms.

The scout now advanced, and untied the cords that bound the horseman, and ordered him to alight. The prisoner obeyed; he offered no resistance. His head was bowed down upon his breast, and he appeared to be completely crushed in spirit.

With the aid of two of the dragoons, War-Cloud assisted him up on the scaffold, and then quickly removed the muffler that had heretofore concealed the prisoner’s face from view.

“My God!” exclaimed Elgar, starting back. “That countenance—it is he—it is Maurice, *my brother!*” and reeling would have fallen, had he not been supported by the scout.

On beholding the face thus exposed to their gaze, the spectators stood aghast.

The features were an exact counterpart, in every respect, of those of Edgar Sherwood.

That these two men were brothers could not now be doubted, and all seemed to comprehend, in an instant, the mistake that had been made. The great mystery was at length solved. It was, indeed, a—DOUBLE FACE.

Imogene now related the cause of her sudden and mysterious disappearance, the treachery of Hank Putney and his implication in the conspiracy for her abduction, and lastly confirmed the statement, that the prisoner before them was the dreaded Iron Hand, by his own confession during their interview in the cave of the Tory League.

At the conclusion, Colonel Hall arose, and congratulated the multitude on the happy termination of what had almost succeeded in becoming a tragedy.

He had scarcely finished, when a low murmur of applause ran through the assembly, which at length broke forth into lusty cheers. All now turned toward the spot where Hank Putney had been seen only a few moments before, among the most clamorous for Captain Sherwood's execution; but the traitor, seeing the turn events were taking, had fled.

Although Edgar Sherwood had been condemned to suffer death for his brother's crimes, nevertheless how little was known concerning the deep plot that had been laid to bring about this dreadful mistake.

CHAPTER XI.

THE UNNATURAL BROTHER.

MAURICE SHERWOOD, *alias* Iron Hand, who had committed so many villainous deeds in the past few years, and whose name had become such a terror to every household, now stood before them, pale and trembling.

Five years previous he had sworn vengeance against his brother, who had never seen him during all this time to know him, and who had believed him to be hundreds of miles away. How near this threat had come to being carried out, the reader already knows.

The desperado's plans had been skillfully concocted, but a just Providence could not look down upon and sanction the success of a scheme so wicked; thus it was this villain had been baffled in the very last act of his drama.

It had been his design to kill his brother secretly, and this he had attempted during the battle related in one of the foregoing chapters. For could he but remove Edgar from his path, the immense estate which he owned in England would, by the conditions of the father's will, be inherited by himself.

However, after this should be accomplished, there was still another object he had in view, and that was to obtain the hand of Imogene Lear. It was she who had first innocently caused the feud between the two brothers.

Maurice had sought her hand when both families resided in England, but had been rejected and his brother accepted. Upon seeing himself thus supplanted by his brother Edgar in the affections of one whom he loved so passionately, his rage was unbounded, and the anger that rankled in his heart soon grew into virulent hatred, which was appeased only by deeds of bloodshed.

He had intended, therefore, after the death of Edgar to stigmatize him by casting upon his memory the odious name of Iron Hand, which he himself possessed, and thus he

hoped that when his brother should have been proved a British spy and a murderer, that Imogene would renounce him.

He, in the mean time, would return to England, and after having possessed himself of the inheritance, would again sue for her hand.

Seeing how signally he had failed in both his attempt to slay Captain Sherwood and in his effort to decoy Imogene to his power by the aid of the forged letter which he had pretended to be from her betrothed, Iron Hand determined to secure her by force, and for that purpose had selected three of his band, together with Hank Putney, who at the time was serving him in the American garrison in the capacity of a spy, as their leader, while he himself assumed the role of the old man to assist in the undertaking.

It was while in this guise that he met Imogene on her return to her father's house, and whispered those words that caused her to start back with such a look of horror and disgust. He intimated to her his knowledge of Maurice Sherwood's whereabouts, and had proposed, as Edgar was then accused of being a traitor, to restore amicable relations between them.

Had she accepted his offer, he would have then and there revealed to her his true character, and afterward trusted to his natural tact for a reconciliation; but her answer taught him how thoroughly he was detested, and from that moment he desperately resolved to carry out his plans to the bitter end.

When Edgar Sherwood had first been arrested, he had half-suspected that it was his twin-brother Maurice who was at the bottom of the mystery, and it was to ascertain if his suspicions were correct that he had dispatched his faithful friend, War cloud, on his secret mission, which was so fruitful in its results, and which had succeeded in saving from an ignominious death one of America's noblest sons, and in bringing to justice the guilty,

CHAPTER XII.

THE END OF THE TRANSGRESSOR IS HARD.

It was the day following that which was to have witnessed the execution of Captain Sherwood.

The morning which had first given promise of a beautiful day turned out to be quite disagreeable, and during the afternoon there was a succession of showers. The night was dark and stormy, and vast clouds covered the heavens.

Occasionally, by the assistance of a flash of lightning, Iron Hand might have been seen sitting in his cell—the one in which his brother had been confined. His head was bowed down upon his knees, and his whole appearance was that of despair.

He finally arose, and approaching the grated window, looked out into the darkness. The storm was turning every thing into wild disorder. He seemed to experience a feeling of consolation in seeing nature partake of the tumult that reigned within his own heart.

The thunder growled in the air like the passion and anger in his thoughts; he howled as the hurricane howled, and his voice was lost in the great voice of Nature, who also seemed to groan with despair.

This desperate man's imagination was a fertile one, and he soon recovered from his dejection and began to put his brains to work in order to concoct some plan of escape. He reclined upon his pallet of straw and thought earnestly.

The hours passed on until the night was well advanced.

At length his attention was attracted by hearing a gentle tap at his window. He started quickly to his feet and listened. Again was the noise repeated.

As he was hurrying across the room to ascertain its cause, there burst forth a peal of thunder accompanied by a flash of lightning, and by the aid of its sickly glare he saw the face of a man appear behind the bars.

He sprung to the window.

"Hank!"

"Yes, chief!" said Hank Putney, for it was he; "but be quiet! be quiet! I must have time to file through these bars. Only take care that I am not seen through th' gratin' of th' door."

"Oh! that is all secure; it is too dark for the sentinel to see you, and I will stand with my back against the door."

"Be ready at the first signal."

"Ay, my trusty fellow; but make haste;" and he retreated to the door, where he placed himself in such a position that no person without the cell could possibly obtain a view of the window.

Amidst the moaning of the storm Iron Hand could hear the grinding of the file upon the bars, and by the light of every flash he perceived the form of Hank Putney.

An hour was spent in breathless suspense; the cold sweat stood upon his brow, and his heart beat quick at every movement he heard in the corridor.

There are hours which seem a year.

At the expiration of an hour, Hank tapped again. Iron Hand hastened to the window. Two of the huge iron bars were removed, forming an opening large enough for a man to pass through.

"Are ye ready?" asked Hank, in a low tone.

"Yes."

"Then wait till I slide down the rope, 'cause it won't hold us both; and I'll get off the walls, and ye can jine me in the woods jist on top of the hill."

With these parting words, Putney slid down the rope out of Iron Hand's sight.

When the Tory thought a sufficient time had elapsed for his faithful ally to have reached a place of safety, he passed through the window, and seizing the dangling rope, began to descend slowly. Notwithstanding the weight of his body, the blast of the hurricane made him wave in the air.

The heavy tramp of approaching footsteps was borne to his ears by the wind. He stopped and listened. The patrol were passing along beneath him, laughing and talking. It was a terrible moment for the fugitive as he remained there suspended, motionless and breathless; but the soldiers soon

passed, and the noise of their retreating footsteps, together with the murmur of their voices, soon died away.

Breathing a sigh of relief, he continued his descent. He shortly found himself standing upon one of the parapets of the fort. Iron Hand knew perfectly well where he was; for he had been upon this same wall before and reconnoitered; it was the time when those who had seen him had taken him for the captain's ghost.

The wall was high from the outside, and he knew it would be madness to leap off. But about thirty yards from where he was standing, there was an angle where little steps were cut into the rocks leading to the ground. Could he but reach this place without being perceived, he would be safe.

The storm had increased, the flashes succeeded each other more rapidly, and the thunder growled fiercely. Iron Hand crawled cautiously on his hands and knees, and was near the angle, when there came a bright flash which lighted up the whole heavens.

The sentinel stationed on the wall opposite caught sight of him and fired. The Tory chieftain sprung to his feet, and clasping his hands to his side, he staggered a moment, then uttering a deep groan, fell to the ground within the fort. The report of the sentinel's rifle aroused the whole garrison, who hastily seized their arms, thinking an attack had been made for the rescue of Iron Hand.

A file of soldiers hastened to the threatened spot, where they found the bloody and apparently lifeless form of the Tory. Two stalwart soldiers lifted him and bore him to the guard-house. The ball had entered his side and the blood was running freely from the wound.

"He's not dead; run for the surgeon!" said one, feeling his pulse.

An eager crowd was soon gathered around, and by the dim light afforded by one or two torches the scene presented a weird appearance. In a few moments the surgeon was at the side of the wounded man, and applying some restoratives he soon became conscious again. Opening his eyes with a wild stare, Iron Hand glanced around upon the assembly.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"Here, in the fort," said the surgeon.

Raising himself, he looked around him again, and then uttering a wild cry, fell backward.

"What is this strange feeling that comes over me?" he asked in a husky whisper, pressing his hands on his bloody wound. "Am I dying?"

"I fear you are," responded the surgeon.

"What! dying did you say?" he repeated, in a hollow voice. "My God! must I die?"

"Yes; make your peace with your Maker, for you have but an hour or so longer to live."

A shudder shook the man's whole frame, and his eyes glared wildly.

"Where is the man that shot me?" he shrieked, pulling a dirk from his belt.

"No, no, my man," said the surgeon; "you should think of something else now instead of vengeance."

"But—but—" the rest of his sentence was inaudible.

Just then the crowd parted to make way for two newcomers, who were drenched with rain. They were Edgar Sherwood and Imogene Lear.

"Maurice!" said Edgar in a low tone, approaching the dying man.

"Great God!" said Iron Hand. "It is he! it is he! I know that voice! Oh! oh! he will kill me, and I can not move. Let me escape—hide me, for I shot him once. I have been his evil shadow all his life!" and he struggled violently to raise himself.

"He raves," said the surgeon; "we must get that dagger from him, or he may do some mischief."

But just then the madman dropped the weapon upon the floor.

His face was distorted with agony; his glassy eyes were fixed apparently on some distant object.

"Look! look!" he whispered, pointing to a window at the further end of the room.

All eyes were quickly turned toward the place indicated, but there was nothing strange there.

"It is the old Whig! look! look! see that gaping wound—the gash upon his temple! It was I that did it—I killed him!"

Hark! hear how he cries for vengeance! See! he comes this way! Oh, horror, horror! he stretches out his hands to seize me—I feel their icy grasp! Oh God! I am dy—dying!’ and with a piercing shriek, he fell back upon his couch.

The assemblage gazed upon the expiring man in gloomy silence. It was, indeed, a horrible sight to see him writhing in such agony. Edgar and Imogene, their hearts bowed down with sorrow, turned away; they could not endure the sight.

It lasted, however, but a few moments more. The impress of the hand of Death was on his pallid brow, and straightening out his stiffening limbs, he gave one long, struggling gasp, then all was over.

The surgeon sprung to his side, but the Tory chieftain was—*dead*.

CHAPTER XIII.

SMILES THROUGH TEARS.

ON one bright spring morning about six months after the events previously related, the woods in the vicinity of Fort Ann were filled with a brilliant assemblage of Continental officers and their ladies, who were all in a merry mood, for there was a wedding to take place between Captain Edgar Sherwood and Imogene Lear.

The whole week had been occupied in preparing the grove for this important occasion. Seats had been erected for the guests, and under the shade of a giant oak a picturesque bower twined with wild roses and luxuriant foliage, had been constructed for the reception of the clergyman. The regimental band also had found a place near at hand made for their benefit.

In a word, every thing had been arranged with the idea of making the captain's wedding a grand affair. It was not to be in a gloomy church, or a fashionable drawing-room crowded to suffocation, but in a grand old forest, under the bright light of heaven.

The troops of the garrison were drawn up in a long line on

either side of the walk leading to the bower, and, stationed here and there along the way, were young girls dressed in white, and holding baskets of flowers to strew before the bride and groom as they passed.

Every thing was in readiness. The shrill notes of a bugle heralded the approach of Edgat and Imogene; and presently they entered the grove attended by the hymeneal retinue. While the little party moved slowly forward toward the bower, the surrounding woods resounded with the melodious and thrilling notes of the band, and the birds sung their sweetest.

It was a beautiful sight to behold these two young lovers approaching the altar to pledge their hearts to each other, and to take those mutual vows of fidelity before God and man.

When they arrived at the bower, an old man came forward with feeble steps, and taking the hand of each he placed them together and murmured:

"My children, I bless you; may Heaven look down upon and prosper this union!"

It was Thomas Lear, Imogene's father.

The reader must not be surprised at this, for a revolution had taken place in the old man's politics since the opening of our story. Being naturally an enthusiastic admirer of justice and a lover of personal and political freedom, he had been, at length, aroused by the feeling of liberty that was everywhere prevalent, and was now a stanch believer in the war for independence.

This radical change had not come about spontaneously but gradually, growing out of observation. He had perceived the injustice of the mother country toward her most promising child, and finally became one of the most devoted adherents to the cause of the Colonies.

The minister now performed the marriage ceremony, and our hero and heroine were pronounced man and wife. In an instant, the dreadful Past, with all its woes and sorrows, was buried in the deepest recesses of oblivion, leaving the happy Present, as it were, like an insurmountable barrier between it and the bright and promising Future, which dawned fair and beautiful upon the horizon of their happiness.

Their more intimate friends—among whom were Colonel Hall and War-Cloud—pressed around the happy couple to

congratulate them, while the soldiers gave three hearty cheers for their brave captain and his lady, making the woods, hills, and valleys ring with the echo of a thousand voices.

There now remains for us to add but a short epilogue and we will have finished. Captain Sherwood fought bravely during the remainder of the Revolution, and when the war was ended, and our country had just entered upon its new-born career of unrivaled greatness, he and Imogene took up their residence in the city of the Mannhattans, where they spent many quiet and peaceful days while floating down the stream of life to the harbor of old age.

War-Cloud frequently paid them visits, bringing with him pretty and costly furs for the "little ones," denoting that he had again taken to hunting the beast instead of Tories.

Hank Putney never made his appearance at the fort again; but we believe he became the chief of the Tory League after the death of Iron Hand, and during some quarrel between him and his ruffians he was killed.

The band soon after was exterminated, and nothing now remains of their former power, save the history of their many villainous deeds, which is written in blood!

THE END.

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